Selves *and* Subjectivities

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REFLECTIONS ON CANADIAN ARTS AND CULTURE

Edited by
Manijeh Mannani *and* Veronica Thompson

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Selves and Subjectivities

MANIJEH MANNANI
AND VERONICA THOMPSON

Canadian identity and its manifestations in the arts are the central themes in *Selves and Subjectivities,* a collection of essays that explores emerging concepts about the representation of the Self and the Other in contemporary Canadian arts and culture. The essays touch upon a variety of issues, most notably gender and sexuality, displacement, trauma, performativity, and linguistic diversity on at least two levels: the individual and the collective. The original call for papers for this collection was broadly conceived to address emerging concepts of identity formation. To our delight, the majority of the submissions had a Canadian focus, which is reflected in these selections. The response made apparent the continuing problematics of identity and the centrality of this debate within the Canadian imagination.

Canadian literature and culture have long been preoccupied with questions of identity, and it can be difficult to discuss representations of Canadian identity in the arts without succumbing to clichéd tropes and turns of phrase; without considering watersheds moments in Canadian identity formation; without restating Northrop Frye's renowned claim that the essential Canadian question is, "Where is here?"; without claiming that "to be Canadian . . . is to exist in a constant state of becoming" (Pevere and Dymond viii). Questions of identity are evident in many of the earliest depictions of Canada and Canadians in explorer and settler art and writing; the arts in Canada continue to grapple with evolving questions of identity into the twenty-first century.

Encounters with the Other characterize the exploration and settlement periods of Canadian history, as Aboriginal, French, and British peoples came into contact in the "New World." Articulations of the Self and representations of the Other in exploration and settler period art and writing expose early and deep ambivalences surrounding identity and identity formation; during the settler period, as the settler finds his or her own indigeneity increasingly questioned in the imperial centre and always questioned in Canada, equivocacies of identity are often foregrounded. Crises of identity persist beyond the settler period, despite, and perhaps due to, post-Confederation desires to establish a unified identity distinct from Britain and the United States in a "newly formed" Canada. Post-Confederation nationhood transformed into cultural nationalism, and for several decades literature and the arts were perceived as imperative to establishing a sense of a national identity, a Canadian Self.

A resurgent desire to ascertain a unified Canadian identity emerged in the 1960s and 1970s, in part linked to expanded opportunities for publishing Canadian books, increased government grants to support Canadian arts, and the addition of

Canadian literature courses in university English departments. However, a definitive Canadian identity remained elusive, and inadequate, given the regional and cultural differences spanning the country. Recognition of racial, ethnic, gender, and class inequalities, too, precluded a unified national identity; the Multiculturalism Act belied it. Instead, and as a result, debates around Canadian identity in the past two to three decades have explored the multiplicities of Canadian identities. *Selves and Subjectivities* enters this debate, presenting a collection of essays that embodies and articulates recent manifestations and delineations of Canadian identity, and that questions and challenges existing ones.

This volume also enters current debates about Canadian identity advanced through analyses of the arts in Canada. Sherrill Grace's *On the Art of Being Canadian*, for example, asserts that "*the art of* Canada continues to tell us what 'being Canadian means'" (4; emphasis in the original) and then substantiates her claim through a study of a wide range of Canadian arts, including fiction, film, and photography. Grace approaches various art forms to ask, "What do the arts and our artists show us or tell us about being Canadian or about being ourselves?" (7) and to illustrate the "persistent yet changing concerns with Canadian identity" (12). In *Canadian Cultural Poesis: Essays on Canadian Culture*, editors Garry Sherbert, Annie Gérin, and Sheila Petty, too, consider ways in which Canadian identity is interpellated and challenged in a collection of interdisciplinary essays organized around the topics of media, language, identity, and politics and connected by shared ambivalences about Canadian identity. According to the editors, "Canadian cultural poesis may . . . be described as an act of hospitality, the invention of new gestures, new ways of welcoming the marginalized other, the stranger, and the foreigner, in order to construct new cultural arrangements between the universal Canadian identity and their own particular identity" (Sherbert et al. 20). The essays collected in

Selves and Subjectivities contribute to these continuing debates on Canadian identity by moving beyond the act of "welcoming the marginalized other"; the essays further acknowledge and theorize the complex negotiations of the Self and Other in Canadian arts and culture as persistently dialogic and multiple.

The essays collected here also reaffirm Diana Brydon's assertion about "the need to rethink Canadian literature beyond older forms of nationalism and internationalism and toward multiscaled visions of place — local, regional, national, and global — each imbricated within the other" (14). Brydon continues: "Writers and critics are rethinking relations of place, space, and non-place in ways that complicate understandings of where and how the nation fits" (14–15). "They are not transcending nation but resituating it," she concludes (15). Accordingly, the contributors to this collection are re-evaluating and resituating the parameters of subjectivity vis-à-vis the Other. The resulting reflections on the Self and the Other are equivocal and ambivalent, and they speak to the complex political and social debates that are attempting to achieve a definitive understanding of Canadian identity.

The varied backgrounds of the artists studied and of the contributors themselves mirror the multifaceted makeup of this country: both engage with a broad spectrum of genres and adopt a wide range of methodologies. Among the artists examined are Tunisian-Canadian poet, writer, literary critic, and scholar Hédi Bouraoui; iconic poet and songwriter Leonard Cohen; Aboriginal rap group War Party; Governor-General's-award-winning playwright Colleen Wagner; feminist poet and novelist Daphne Marlatt; film director David Cronenberg; actor, writer, and puppeteer Ronnie Burkett; and Ukranian-Canadian author and media scholar Marusya Bociurkiw. The authors, too, are diverse in their scholarly interests and are at different stages of their academic careers: some are upcoming scholars;

some are well established and internationally recognized. The selection of these articles is based on their overarching coverage and convergence of both mainstream and marginal genres in contemporary Canadian culture such as the novel, poetry, puppet theatre, rap, dub music, documentary films, science fiction movies, and plays. The theoretical apparatus encompasses many philosophers and critics, from Jacques Lacan to Julia Kristeva, René Gerard to Marshall McLuhan, Frantz Fanon to Homi Bhabha. Poststructuralism, psychoanalysis, postcolonialism, feminism and gender theory, race theory, performance and media theory are among the critical schools of thought that inform these analyses. It is noteworthy, however, that in their analyses of identity formation, the contributors offer distinct interpretations of the Self and the Other based on the subjects of their exploration and the theoretical approaches undertaken. Finally, while all of the articles tackle art produced by Canadian artists, not all of them are preoccupied with the specificities of Canadian space: some probe beyond into a global context.

The first two chapters by Elizabeth Dahab and Janne Cleveland belong to the category that transcends the Canadian locale. Elizabeth Dahab introduces readers to a relatively unexamined Canadian writer of Tunisian origin, Hédi Bouraoui, and his novel *La femme d'entre les lignes* (The Woman Between the Lines). In her essay, Dahab engages Roland Barthes's concept of *jouissance*, itself inspired by "an expression used by Arabic scholars to qualify the body of a text as the definite body" (11), to explore the (amorous) relationship between the reader and the writer in her reading of this novel. As Dahab contemplates Bouraoui's themes and leitmotifs, she mimics his style and coins her own neologisms, such as *amour-mots* (17), that exemplify, clarify, and characterize his writing. "Transculturalism," a term Dahab credits to Bouraoui (*Voices* 174), thematically mirrors his blending of words and genres and presents a blending of cultures

as "an alternative construct [of migrant experience] ranging somewhere between ethnicity and total assimilation" (175). This concept of exilic identity is enacted through the relationship between the protagonist, Lisa, and the unnamed francophone narrator of *La femme d'entre les lignes*, a relationship that has for ten years taken place exclusively through letters, quite literally between the lines. The dual nature of writing and reading processes, conveyed allegorically through the characters, motifs, and themes in the narrative, open up a space for acceptance of dualities and multiplicities. According to Dahab, intertextuality is yet another key concept in Bouraoui's oeuvre. She explicates the echoes of other works and novels in Bouraoui's writing which replicates Barthes's own use of intertextuality.

Janne Cleveland, in her "Mourning Lost 'Others' in Ronnie Burkett's *Happy,*" draws upon predominantly Freudian psychoanalytic theories of mourning and melancholy to discuss how Canadian theatre artist and master puppeteer, Ronnie Burkett, delves deep into the issues of the loss of the Self and the mourning of the Other, when the Other upon whom the Self's existence depends is lost. While the play itself is set in western Canada, it transcends this setting in its preoccupation with the trauma of individual loss and "the traumas of the human condition" (36), as enacted by the internationally renowned characters that populate the Gray Cabaret. Cleveland discusses two different ways of dealing with loss and keeping the Self intact: through remembering and reliving lost relationships and through retaining intimate objects that belonged to the lost Other. The experience of loss is amplified by the liminal subjectivity of the puppets. Objects themselves, the puppets emphasize the "contested duality of subject/object relations — a duality that has a parallel in Self/Other dynamics" (48). Moreover, in her detailed discussion of the "uncanny," Cleveland sees the puppet/puppeteer relationship as an allegory for

the Self/Other relationship. The allegory reveals the complex and persistent connection between the Self and the Other and how the mitigation of grief requires the acknowledgement and acceptance of both.

Colleen Wagner stages another traumatic loss in her play *The Monument,* which is the subject of Gilbert McInnis's essay. McInnis contests the generally held idea that Wagner's play is inspired by the Bosnian War and the war crimes in the former Yugoslavia. Rather, he asserts that the 1989 massacre of fourteen women by Marc Lépine at École Polytechnique in Montréal and the subsequent decision by a group of women in Vancouver to "create a monument in memory of the fourteen students" (70) form the backdrop against which the play was written. McInnis focuses on the interplay between the two characters, Stetko, a soldier charged with the murder of numerous women, and Mejra, the mother of Ana, whom Stetko murdered during an unidentified war somewhere abroad. Set in the aftermath of this war, the play investigates the horrific violence and ensuing monumentalizing of its victims. Applying René Girard's distinction between the superficial and deeper levels of meaning in a play (the first corresponds, in Girard's description, to the "cathartic or sacrificial reading" of the play and the second to the "revelation of mimetic rivalry and structural scapegoating") (70), McInnis draws parallels between the play and the documentary *Marker of Change: The Story of the Women's Monument*, which is based on the commemoration of the fourteen murdered women.

As *The Monument* moves toward reconciliation and forgiveness, McInnis highlights how the dynamics of the victim-victimizer relationship are explored through a reversal of roles: in the first instance, Ana is the object of Stetko's brutality; in the second, Stetko is victimized by Ana's mother, Mejra. As Stetko changes from a victimizer to a victim, he is forced to recognize the subjectivity of his own victims. In his explication of the

parallel dénouements of the play and the documentary, McInnis points to the connection between the ritualistic ceremonies during which the names of all the murdered women of both the Montréal massacre and the war are spoken to rehumanize them.

In the next essay, Anne Nothof provides a comprehensive overview of "visible minority theatre artists" (95) in Canada and contextualizes the problematics of acclimatization and assimilation within the mainstream society. The article attends to the diasporic theatre from South and East Asia, the Middle East, the Caribbean, and South and Central America. After delineating clear definitions of multiculturalism, transculturalism, crossculturalism, intraculturalism, and interculturalism, Nothof expresses her agreement with critic Ric Knowles, who argues that interculturalism encourages the "potential negotiation, exchange and forging of new and hybrid subjectivities" and allows for "spaces between cultures" and thus perceives it as what Nothof calls a "positive, if tenuous, possibility" in this discourse (97). Yet she is also cognizant of how difficult it is to disagree with Josette Feral, who views interculturalism as a form of homogenizing globalization that "threatens the diversity of cultures" (97). According to Nothof, this dialogic discourse allows for a representation of cultural Self in response to the Other rather than in opposition to it, and she explains how the representations of the Self and the Other are complicated within the plays. In her analyses of different plays and their productions, Nothof looks at the ways that playwrights and producers view the immigrant experience and the dialectics of the relationship between the Self and the Other. Finally, she posits the importance of the "company mandates and the predilections of theatre practitioners" (98) that decide if, when, and how the cultural Other can be represented as the cultural Self as both endeavour to find a space within the Canadian theatre tradition.

In "Pulling Her Self Together: Daphne Marlatt's *Ana*

Historic," Veronica Thompson turns to an examination of the colonial past and postcolonial present of Canada. Grounded in the intersections across feminist and postcolonial theories, the essay investigates the connections between language and maternal experience in settler-invader identity formation in Marlatt's canonical novel. By juxtaposing the theories of language of Homi Bhabha, Dennis Lee, Hélène Cixous, and Luce Irigaray, Thompson provides a reading of the female body and the mother-daughter relationship in colonial and postcolonial spaces that create new possibilities of selfhood for the protagonist, Annie. In her reassessment of her roles as wife and mother, Annie constructs a story for Mrs. Richards, a figure whom she discovers in the Vancouver library's historical archives. Despite scant historical information, Annie and, by extension, Marlatt embellish significant details of Mrs. Richards's life that function as both metaphor and catalyst for Annie's own birth in the narrative, details such as the birth of a child, and a potential lesbian relationship. Annie's historical reconstructions serve to question and supplement established patriarchal, colonial history, and the novel culminates in a redefinition of Self that recovers female histories.

Gendered ethnicity is the prominent issue in Dana Patrascu-Kingsley's examination of Marusya Bociurkiw's novel, *The Children of Mary*. Patrascu-Kingsley identifies the need in contemporary Canadian culture to move beyond defining ethnicity as merely the superficial differences among communities and to interrogate "traditional static notions of ethnicity" (154). She posits the necessity to challenge "the binary model of us/them" (151) and to engage in reflective and thorough cross-cultural dialogues. The essay analyzes the ways in which Bociurkiw's narrative destabilizes stereotypes associated with ethnicity, gender, and race as they intersect. Largely relying upon Judith Butler's *Bodies That Matter* and *Gender Trouble,* Patrascu-Kingsley argues

that ethnicity, like gender, is performative. By laying bare the relationships among the main characters, such as the lesbian relationship between the Métis Angélique and the Ukranian-Canadian Sonya, the novelist reveals how performances of ethnicity and gender are constructed according to one's immediate milieu. Moreover, Patrascu-Kingsley queries collective concepts of traditionalism and assimilation within the heteronormative Ukranian-Canadian society by characterizing individuals who are representative of a wide range of ethnic, sexual, and racial identities and who discover ways to bridge the gaps across generations.

In his analysis of Leonard Cohen's *Beautiful Losers*, Jesse Rae Archibald-Barber examines the causes behind the "loss of the Self . . . for the modern English Canadian" (175) which he sees as complicated by the mechanization of quotidian life and the resulting nihilism and spiritual emptiness of a post-Confederation Canada. Both the essay and the novel recognize the numerous losses that shape Canada's colonial history and the need for a stable and encompassing national identity based on that shared history of loss. In the early stages of the novel, Cohen seems to propose that the embracing of an Aboriginal way of life and a return to nature could compensate for the metaphysical vacuum the Self experiences. However, Archibald-Barber stresses Cohen's recognition of the inherent risk in idolizing and romanticizing the Aboriginal Other in ways that echo pre-Confederation representations of the indigenous Canadian. Since Cohen has reservations about turning wholeheartedly to Aboriginal systems, he puts forth the use of a "universal concept of magic" (177) that transcends both Aboriginal and Christian cultures and negates all belief systems. With a critical eye on assimilation and conversion, Archibald-Barber points to the break with nature that occurred following the forced conversion of the indigenous peoples to Christianity, causing a divide between

nature and consciousness, as well as assimilation into a world fractured by "pestilence, disease, alienation, and nihilism" (188).

The final two essays of the collection focus on iterations of the Self in Canadian music and media. Thor Polukoshko's essay, "Playing the Role of the Tribe," deals with the concepts of identity politics in Canadian Aboriginal rap music and of appropriation vis-à-vis its African-American counterpart. Polukoshko draws upon the similarities between Canadian Aboriginal and African-American experience to theorize the performance of race and to explore the marginalization of the First Nations. The author carefully examines the way tribal imagery finds its way into First Nations rap music and how, for Aboriginal peoples, "playing Indian" can function as a subversive "means to validate their own identities" (210). Making use of Fanon's theories of race, Polukoshko emphasizes dialogism as integral to both African-American and Canadian Aboriginal rap music, positing that both "must continually construct identities that exist, in part, in relationship to white oppression" (220). Polukoshko reads the appropriation of rap music as a means of asserting "racial and artistic authenticity" (209).

In "Toward a Theory of the Dubject," Mark McCutcheon offers a new theorization of subjectivity, one that is "mediatized and remediated . . . through technologies of mechanical reproduction" (236). He coins the term *dubject* to make obvious "the dubbed and doubled" nature of Self in the postmodern "mediated spaces of representation" (237). McCutcheon uses the practice of remixing tracks of music ("dub") as a metaphor for new configurations of Canadian identity. He then points to unlikely connections between dub and a variety of Canadian cultural texts including David Cronenberg's film *Videodrome;* Tony Burgess's novel *Pontypool Changes Everything;* Bruce McDonald's film adaptation, *Pontypool;* Margaret Atwood's autograph technology, the LongPen; and Glenn Gould's "live" music

performances and interviews recorded in solitude. McCutcheon employs Judith Butler's, Paul Gilroy's, and Marshall McLuhan's theories in his articulation of dubjectivity as it is reflected in Canadian media culture. The essay begins and ends with "incarnations and iterations" (261) of subjectivity articulated within Canada's colonial history.

Despite the broad spectrum of the artistic and cultural texts examined and the distinct approaches employed, the essays demonstrate significant shared concerns about representations of Canadian identity. Throughout the essays we find numerous references to assimilation; liminality; performances of ethnicity, race, gender and sexuality; various forms of loss; interactions between the past and present; and generational disparities that influence the formation of the Self and the Other. The interconnections of these themes are apparent in essays dealing with First Nations, settler-invader, immigrant, and ethnic experience. The repeated attention to transcultural encounters, exchanges, and alliances; challenges to and of cultural diversity; and the dialectics of forgiveness and acceptance emphasize the constant politically charged nature of investigations of and incursions into the question of Canadian identity.

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A Semiotic Reading of Hédi Bouraoui's *The Woman Between the Lines*

ELIZABETH DAHAB

> Le texte est (devrait être) cette personne désinvolte qui montre son derrière au *Père Politique*.
>
> The text is (should be) this carefree person who shows her behind to *Father Politics*.
>
> ROLAND BARTHES, *Le plaisir du texte*, 84

In a 2007 study subtitled "Au pays du Migramour, la transfusion des mots sans visage" ("In the Country of Migralove, the Transfusion of Words Without Face"), the critic Claudette Broucq very aptly qualified Hédi Bouraoui's *La femme d'entre les lignes* (2002) as "un livre rare, écrit d'un autre langage que celui que nous connaissons" ("a rare book, written with a language other

than the one we know"; 87).[1] Broucq's remark is highly evocative of Roland Barthes's judicious observation in *Le plaisir du texte,* an observation inspired by an expression used by scholars of Arabic to describe the body of a text as the "definite body" or, in the words of Barthes, *le corps certain* ("the body itself"). Barthes writes:

> Il paraît que les érudits arabes, en parlant du texte, emploient cette expression admirable: *le corps certain.* Quel corps? Nous en avons plusieurs; le corps des anatomistes et des physiologistes, celui que voit ou que parle la science . . . mais nous avons aussi un corps de jouisaance fait uniquement de relations érotiques, sans aucun rapport avec le premier. . . . Le texte a une forme humaine, c'est une figure, une anagramme du corps? Oui, mais de notre corps érotique.[2] (*Le plaisir* 26)

The notion of a "definite body" refers to the double nature, or dual reality, of both the human body and the literary text (the object of study of physiologists and philologists, respectively), a reality that belongs to the realm of the physical, on the one hand, and to the realm of intense enjoyment, or *jouissance,* on the other. This *dédoublement,* or twinning, one akin to symbolist aesthetics, is the mark of Bouraoui's singular novel — with particular emphasis, in my view, on the *jouissance* aspect of the

1 A longer version of the present essay was published as chapter 6 of my monograph, *Voices of Exile in Contemporary Canadian Francophone Literature* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2009). All translations from the French are my own.

2 "It appears that, in speaking of texts, scholars of Arabic use an admirable expression: *le corps certain.* But what body? We have more than one: there is the body of anatomists and physiologists, the one that science observes and describes . . . but we also have a body of *jouissance,* one made up exclusively of erotic attachments, without any connection to the first. . . . The text has a human aspect: it is a configuration, an anagram of the body — ? Yes, but of our erotic body."

reading and writing experience that occurs throughout.[3] The novel reads like a partial application of Barthes's semiotic interpretation of amorous discourse and the interaction between reader and writer in literary texts. A love story is enmeshed in the deceptively simple, self-reflexive plot, and *dédoublement* is seen here as well with regard to the loving subject (the writer) and his devoted female reader, each of whom is supplanted by a mirror reflection, or a double, at the very end. Bouraoui's highly metafictional, self-reflexive novel revels in its own making, ultimately supplanting itself.[4]

The title itself, *La femme d'entre les lignes*, occurs no fewer than five times throughout the novel. Does it speak of Lisa, a protagonist born between the lines, who will transfer into reality and back between the lines, or vanish altogether, throughout the narrative? "Entre les lignes" ("between the lines") also comes to

3 A similar *rapprochement* between Barthes and Bouraoui was proposed by critic Robert Elbaz in "Sur la sémiotique matricielle de Bouraoui," which appeared in 1996, years before the publication of *La femme d'entre les lignes*. Hédi Bouraoui (1932–) is a Toronto-based poet, novelist, short-story writer, literary critic, and scholar, whose vast output — over forty volumes to date — spans four decades, from the mid-1960s to the present. Now professor emeritus of French studies at York University, he is credited with having fostered the growth of French studies and francophone culture in Ontario, an achievement for which he was recognized in 1999 when he was awarded the Prix du Nouvel-Ontario for "his contribution in the field of poetry, fiction and interculturalism." As president, and one of the co-founders, of the African Literature Association, Bouraoui worked to promote studies on the Maghreb. His efforts culminated in the founding of York University's Centre Canada-Maghreb in 2002, which he was instrumental in establishing. The centre houses a large collection of francophone literature, mainly from the Maghreb, Québec, the Maritimes, and Ontario, but also from the Caribbean and Sub-Saharan Africa.

4 As Elizabeth Sabiston points out (144–45), the *dédoublement* is suggested at the outset by the book's cover illustration, which shows Leda's seduction by Jupiter in the form of a swan. What comes to mind is the image of the two sets of twins to which Leda gave birth as a result of the rape.

refer to the silent complicity at work between the two characters, the delight sensed by the male narrator and his female reader, Lisa, in seeking pleasure around the text itself, in "l'entre-les-lignes qui nous enivre, dans l'euphorie des blancs où stagnent des millefeuilles de sentiments muets" ("the between-the-lines that intoxicates us, in the euphoria of blank spaces where lie stacks of delicious sheets of silent feelings"; 62).[5] The notion evoked here pertains to *jouissance,* qualitatively different from *plaisir,* which, unlike the latter, cannot be expressed. In the words of Barthes:

> La jouissance est in-dicible, inter-dite. Je renvoie à Lacan ("ce à quoi il faut se tenir, c'est que la jouisssance est interdite à qui parle comme tel, ou encore qu'elle ne puisse être dite qu'*entre les lignes*"). (*Le plaisir* 36; emphasis added)
>
> *Jouissance* is inexpressible, for-bidden. I recall Lacan ("it is important to remember that *jouissance* is forbidden to the one who speaks of it as such; it can only be spoken *between the lines*").

"Between the lines" is, in essence, the intent of the novel titled after this common expression. That silence, necessary for the survival of the love relationship, is best expressed by the narrator speaking of the correspondence he held with Lisa for a decade, in the following terms:

> De toute façon, ce n'est pas dans le corps de ses lettres que j'ai flairé cette attirance pour la substantifique moelle de mon écriture, mais dans les non-dits éloquents, dans les écarts entre les signifiés de ces mots que nous parvenions à échanger entre nous. (96)
>
> Anyway, it was not in the body of her letters that I sensed that attraction to the substantial marrow of my writing, but in the eloquent unsaid, in the discrepancies between the signified of the words we managed to exchange.

5 See also pages 88, 99, 139, and 140.

In fact, though there is constant allusion, throughout this first-person narrative, to the intense textual enjoyment occurring in the discretional space *entre les lignes,* there is also a reluctance to speak or name that joy, lest it become tarnished: "Une fois nommée, toute chose perd sa force et son mystère" ("Once named, everything loses its strength and its mystery"; 94), a statement highly reminiscent of Barthes's aforementioned pronouncement on the impossibility of speaking about the element of *jouissance* in a text unless one speaks from within it, in its own terms — "en lui, à sa manière" (*Le plaisir* 37–38). To the extent that the essence of a text lies in the ineffable experience of *jouissance,* the text will remain impervious to external appraisal, a fact that explains why critics have found but few "handholds" with which to tackle Bouraoui's novel (Sabiston 143).[6]

The book is divided into two parts, the first titled "Le parchemin de la mémoire" (The Parchment of Memory) and the second, and significantly longer part, "Migramour" (Migralove), a term encountered in one of Bouraoui's earlier novels, *La pharaone* (1998), and a neologism constructed so as to include love, death, and nomadism (migration). Part One introduces Marguarita Felice, nicknamed Lisa, an avid reader of an unnamed narrator who sells the *Encyclopedia Britannica* to support himself. Lisa is a journalist stationed in Milan, where she works for a newspaper, *La Repubblica,* as editor of the literary section, in which she includes sympathetic book reviews of the narrator's works. The nameless narrator is a francophone writer who is at home on three continents and is originally from North Africa.

6 It is also worth noting the collection of essays edited by Elizabeth Sabiston and Suzanne Crosta, *Perspectives critiques: L'oeuvre d'Hédi Bouraoui,* published in 2006 as the outcome of a 2005 conference at York University. Out of a total of twenty-four, this collection contains no fewer than four critical articles dedicated to *La femme d'entre les lignes.*

He is single; he has had at least one major love relationship with a woman reminiscent of Lisa, and he travels extensively. For ten years the pair has communicated *in absentia* about the narrator's work and about art and poetry. Finally they meet in Lisa's native Italy, where they enjoy more than textual pleasures (though this remains ambiguous and intimately intertwined with the textual *jouissance* that is the hallmark of their rapport) before he returns home by Québec Air, thus suggesting that Canada is his home. The little we learn about Lisa's life is as follows: she lives with her invalid and tyrannical mother for whom she cares; she is single and childless and has a niece, Anna, on whom she dotes.[7]

Throughout this first-person narrative, there is an abundance of references to the avid pleasure Lisa derives from reading the work of the narrator, who lives as much to be read by her as she herself lives to read him. Most significantly, the word *mots* ("words") is the most frequently encountered term, occurring no fewer than forty times.[8] In fact, *mots* constitutes the very last word of the novel; we find it as well on the second page, where the narrative convention on which the book-in-the-making rests is still being established and where it stands for the only remaining expedient of the unhappy narrator separated from and madly in love with Lisa: "je n'ai aucun recours sauf celui de l'aimer avec mes mots" ("my only recourse is to love her with my words"; 10). This statement evokes the quip by Francis Ponge taken up by Roland Barthes in *Fragments de discours amoureux*, "Je parle et tu m'entends, donc nous sommes" ("I speak and you

7 We learn that Anna is involved in a relationship in which she is brutalized by her lover, a failed North African artist, and it seems that the *amour-larmes* of Anna and Ali parallels the *amour-mots* of Lisa and the narrator.

8 See, for example, pages 10, 11, 15, 22, 23, 25, 26, 28, 30, 36, 37, 40, 41, 49, 62, 63, 65, 66, 69, 70, 79, 83, 84, 88, 90, 96, and 129.

listen to me, therefore we are"; 198).[9] This aphorism can easily be rephrased in the novel at hand to read, "I write and you read me, therefore we are," in what comes to suggest the "extreme solitude" that, Barthes held, characterizes a lover's discourse (*Fragments* 5). By extension, I would add, this extreme solitude is an attribute of the creative process as well, since in *La femme d'entre les lignes,* both themes, love and the making of a novel, are woven into the very fabric of the narrative. But perhaps the closed circuit in which the narrator-poet and his reader-critic communicate partakes in a self-reflexive process of which the narrator-lover is increasingly aware; indeed, he tends to reiterate, perhaps in order to understand it, the phenomenon that links him to his admirer. In his own words:

> Pendant dix ans, elle s'est penchée sur mon corps textuel glanant, comme une abeille laborieuse, le pollen de mes mots pour en faire son miel journalier, et ses ébats nocturnes. (11)
>
> For ten years, she has bent over my text-body, collecting, like a laborious bee, the pollen of my words to make of it her daily honey and her nightly pleasures.

> Incapable de résister à la chimie particulière des mots . . . (63)
>
> Incapable of resisting the special chemistry of my words . . .

> Nous ne sommes pas seulement tombés amoureux de l'amour, ce farceur de première classe, mais par les 'mots,' nous en avons fait la passion de notre vie. (70)
>
> We did not only fall in love with love, this first-rate prankster, but with "words" we made it the very passion of our life.

9 Ponge writes (203): « Puisque tu nous lis (mon livre et moi), cher lecteur, donc nous sommes (toi, lui, et moi) » ["Since you read us (my book and me), dear reader, therefore we are (you, it, and myself)"].

> Mes poèmes sont une rivière où Lisa s'abreuve. (71)
>
> My poems are a river where Lisa quenches her thirst.

> elle se laisse éclabousser . . . par les mots qui la tiennent en éveil (83)
>
> she lets herself be splashed . . . by words that keep her awake

> Les mots deviennent des baisers lancés à la sauvette. (83)
>
> Words become kisses stealthily given.

> . . . et c'est dans mon alphabet passionnel, dans sa glorieuse disponiblité que Lisa, s'articulant poème, s'identifie à moi. (91)
>
> . . . and it is in my bodily alphabet, in its glorious availability, that Lisa, becoming a poem, identifies with me.

> Lisa m'a déclaré qu'elle était fécondée, au tournant d'un quatrain irrégulier aux rimes internes. (125)
>
> At the turn of a quatrain with internal rhyme, Lisa told me she felt as if she'd become pregnant.

Throughout the narrative, *amour* and *mots* could almost be used interchangeably, the one substituted for the other, in what comes to constitute what I have called *amour-mots,* a self-explanatory construct rich with implications. The narrative's language of love is infused with metaphors pertaining to the human body. It will draw heavily on images evoking the latter, eventually displacing those images to become itself a *body*. The novel is replete with such examples, among them those above: "splashed by words," "chemistry of my words," "my bodily alphabet," and, of course, Lisa "fertilized" (*fécondée*) at the turn of a quatrain. The image of a *corps-texte,* or "text-body," which occurs in the first of the quotations above ("mon corps textuel"), as well as a number of other times in the novel,[10] is a prime instance of

10 See, for instance, pages 11, 28, 64, 85, 127, and 131.

Bouraoui's attempt, whether conscious or not, to bring an idea across, namely, that of a heavy interlinking between love, words, and eroticism. From bodily flesh to the flesh of words, such is the key concept of the *corps-texte* (in keeping with a dual notion of reality, as both physical and non-material, the narrator will distinguish "le corps-texte" from "le corps tout court" [64]) and the essence of that "amour rare qu'on extrait des livres," that "rare love extracted from books" (13), which is displayed in *La femme d'entre les lignes*. But how does this mechanism work in relation to the two main protagonists, the reader and the narrator of this novel?

To reply to this question, we need to recall that Barthes has advanced the notion that the pleasure of a text, in the act of reading, lies in an erotic rapport between two subjects, two personal pronouns, a *je* (I) narrator-writer who calls for a *tu* (you), the reader who is, so to speak, courted by the writer: "Sans ce mouvement amoureux, ce mouvement du désir, il n'y a pas de texte possible" ("Without that amorous movement, that movement of desire, there is no possible text"; Jouve 103). The reader undertakes a sensual operation whose foundation is the body itself (or, more precisely, the reader as a specific subject) to (re)structure a given text in order to attain what Barthes calls *signifiance,* defined as meaning produced sensually.[11] "Le corps, c'est la différence irréductible, et c'est en même temps le principe de toute structuration" ("The body is the irreducible difference, and at the same time the principle of every structuration"), contends Barthes (qtd. in Jouve 101). In this sense, the act of reading and the organization that happens therein are akin to

11 As Barthes puts it in *Le plaisir du texte* (97): « Qu'est-ce que la signifiance? *C'est le sens en ce qu'il est produit sensuellement* » ("What is significance? *It is meaning produced sensually";* emphasis in the original).

the act of courting. Both the lover and the reader embark on a trip of desire where they seek novelty through the Other.[12] This inner mechanism underlying the reader-writer relationship (as well as the role of the reader as creator of the text) is at work throughout *La femme d'entre les lignes,* a novel that can be read as an illustration of this mechanism.[13] Says the narrator about Lisa-the-reader:

> Dans l'enchantement, son corps avance vers la vie qui circule dans le texte, vers les choses qui lui racontent leurs histoires. (96)
>
> With delight, her body advances toward the life that circulates in the text, toward things that tell her their stories.

The sensuality of the text (especially related to the sense of taste) in *La femme d'entre les lignes* is visually established in a passage very early in the narrative, during the very first live encounter between the two main protagonists after their ten-year correspondence. The narrator offers Lisa, his *narrataire* ("narratee," or privileged reader), four copies of an art book, and in between the books he puts a package of dates stuffed with almond paste flavored with orange blossom (a gift that is hardly appreciated), with the aim of compensating the

12 In *La littérature selon Roland Barthes* (104), Jouve writes: « le rapport érotique de deux sujets à l'intérieur d'un texte: tel semble être le plaisir profond de la littérature » ("the erotic rapport of two subjects inside a text, such is the profound pleasure of literature").

13 Jouve argues that the erotic rapport with a text becomes more violent if the text is replete with unexpected, baroque, eccentric words. Such is the case with a number of neologisms used by Bouraoui, which are almost always surprising. As Jouve remarks: « On pourrait presque parler du viol du texte sur la personne du lecteur » ("One can almost speak of rape on the person of the reader"; 102).

otherwise abstract nature of writing with an immediate touch of sensuality: "le goût, l'odorat de ce fruit-là sortiront, peut-être, de l'abstraction de l'écrit" ("the taste and smell of that fruit will perhaps emerge from the abstraction of the writing"; 14). The "delectation" that Lisa is supposed to experience when eating the dates is corroborated, this time explicitly, in the second part of the novel. Speaking of a social occasion where Lisa was present, the narrator-lover delights in the silent complicity charged with love at work between Lisa and himself:

> Ainsi, nous faisons l'amour en plein public sans que personne ne puisse en décoder le moindre signe, à la manière d'une *dégustation de texte* dans l'intimité de la lecture. (116; emphasis added)
>
> So we make love in public without anybody being able to decipher the slightest sign, in the manner of a *text tasting* in the intimacy of reading.

The key expression here is *dégustation de texte,* equated with the intimacy of lovemaking. Here again, it is the notion of text-body, explained above, that comes through, a notion that will subsume every aspect of the novel, including the love of art, crystallized in the second part of the novel.

In Part Two of *La femme d'entre les lignes,* entitled "Migr-amour," the narrative becomes highly allegorical. Lisa is supplanted by her own Palimpsest, created by her lover-narrator, and she in turn creates a fictional character, Virebaroud (incidentally an anagram containing two of the three syllables of Bouraoui's name), whom she takes as lover, displacing her writer-narrator.[14] She then "kills the father who nourishes her fantasies" (*Elle tue le père qui féconde — ses fantasmes;* 137),

14 Claudette Broucq (80) sees in the name Virebaroud a reference to the adjective *baroudeur,* signifying someone who enjoys struggles.

Virebaroud himself, who seems to have mutated from created character to writer-creator — as Lisa, in turn, not unlike the troubadour who appropriates the words of the poet, is transformed from reader-critic into writer-creator before she disappears altogether. Once more, the key issue here is *mots,* words that have entranced her and in which she found her raison d'être. In one of her letters to the narrator, she writes:

> Séduite par le pouvoir des mots, je suis tentée de voguer à ma guise, recréant le héros que je nomme Virebaroud, et qui incarne la synthèse de tous tes personnages. Ce protagoniste principal erre en moi, comme s'il était en chair et en os. (103)
>
> Seduced by the power of words, I am tempted to wander at my leisure, recreating the hero that I name Virebaroud, one who incarnates the synthesis of all your characters. This protagonist wanders in me, as if made of flesh and bone.

The narrator-lover in turn feels the necessity of setting himself free from the father figure presiding over his creative process, in order to master his own destiny: "dans mon acte d'écriture, il est nécessaire que je me débarrasse du père" ("In my act of writing, I must get rid of the father"; 139). He kills that paternal presence, just as Lisa-Palimpsest has killed him in Virebaroud, and, toward the end of the narrative, he is carrying his father's cadaver, trying to find him a burial place as he wanders across the five continents, in a gesture much reminiscent of Wadji Mouawad's *Littoral,* in which the protagonist, Wilfrid, sets out to bury his father in his native land. But whereas the latter managed to find at least a burial place in the bottom of the sea, our narrator-lover is condemned, in his own words, "to perpetual wandering" (à l'errance perpétuelle; 139). Lisa-Palimpsest and Virebaroud, perhaps more real than the pair who created them, will end the narrative with a new set of epistolary exchanges, which mirror the pre-transformation

epistolary exchanges between Lisa and the narrator in Part One. Perhaps the novel ends when the process of its making has reached maturation or when pleasure has become impossible with the death of the father. Says Barthes, "La mort du père enlèvera à la littérature beaucoup de ses plaisirs" ("The death of the father will take away from literature a lot of its pleasures"; *Le plaisir* 75). Perhaps Lisa had to leave her writer confronted with a blank page to set him free from the tyranny of love and words, or *amour-mots,* in order to become a creator in her own right: "elle se débarrasse ainsi de l'auteur, et s'y substituant, elle devient, elle-même, l'auteur" ("she gets rid of the author, and, by taking his place, she thus becomes herself the author"; 137), says the narrator.

The narrator-lover, "who is subtly undermined by his creator, and finally displaced" (Sabiston 153), will have to begin a new book or become a character himself, as he begins a new amorous relationship with Pia, the incarnation of Lisa-Palimpsest. Thus the reading/writing adventure continues through renewed, or transferred, love and pleasure. Significantly, Pia is involved, if not in writing, at least in all aspects of book production. Is this new love triangle (the narrator, Palimpsest, and the possibility of a new book) foreshadowed in Part One by the umbrella that awkwardly stands between Lisa and the narrator during their first encounter, as Sabiston (151) suggests? Does the sliding back and forth from reader (Lisa) to character (Virebaroud and Lisa-Palimpsest) to writer-creator (the narrator and then Lisa), a constant shift occurring in the narrative between characters, functions, and roles, suggest that, ultimately, reading and writing, the reader and the writer, the narrator and the protagonist, are one and the same, interchangeable so to speak? Towards the end of the narrative, the narrator proclaims the twinning/*dédoublement* that is the essence of the novel, in the following terms:

> Je viens donc de me détacher d'un moi pour narrer à la troisième personne, l'histoire de mon autre en moi qui est attelé au couple créé pour l'amour de percer l'énigme d'un migramour à l'aube d'un siècle nouveau. Narrateur et personnage sont, en effet, distanciés et confondus . . . (133)
>
> So, I have just walked out of myself in order to narrate in the third person the story of my-other-in-myself attached to the couple created for the love of piercing the enigma of a *migramour* at the dawn of a new century. Narrator and character are, in fact, distanced and fused together . . .

The novel is, in fact, an exteriorization or an outward manifestation of a phenomenon akin to semiosis, understood as a verbal space where the play of signs can occur, and as an illustration of the erotic literary effect on reader and writer alike. *La femme d'entre les lignes* can easily be entitled "The Adventure of a Reader," after the story by Italo Calvino, since it partakes in the postmodernist tradition of fragmentation, parody, pastiche, allegory, and *fouillis* (hodgepodge). A ludic dimension is also at play here, such as when Lisa kills the author and recreates him in the image of Virebaroud.

La femme d'entre les lignes can also be said to stand as a metaphor for the relationship at work between the two subjects that constitute the polarity of the writing/reading axis. As early as *Le plaisir du texte,* Barthes advanced the thought that textually there is no such thing as a passive body behind the text (the reader) and an active body in front of it (the writer). Rather, there are two subjects who act upon each other in a relationship of creation and re-creation. The book creates its reader who thus exists as a result of having encountered it, restructuring and recreating it in turn. The initial trio that forms the characters in *La femme d'entre les lignes,* namely, the narrator, Lisa and her Palimpsest, followed by the fourth and fifth Virebaroud and Pia (the latter herself the incarnation of Lisa-Palimpsest) are

all attempts to model a process of perpetual duplication and *dédoublement,* whereby the book that is *lived* is also the one being *read* and the one being *written* — where one can be at once a reader, character in a book, and a living character. Here, second-order characters may claim to be the "original verbal conceptor" (*concepteur verbal original;* 139) and to displace their author. Says the reconciled narrator-lover in a Pirandellian, metafictional moment very much reminiscent of *Six Characters in Search of an Author:*

> Je ne suis plus l'auteur à la recherche de personnages ou d'histoires. Mes personnages, à leur tour, ne sont plus à la recherche de leur auteur. (72)
>
> I am no longer the author in search of characters or stories. My characters are in turn no longer in search of their author.[15]

The metafictional nature of the book-in-the-making is emphasized at the end of the narrative by one of the characters, who asserts that "l'oeuvre contient une partie de réflexion sur son propre processus créateur" ("the work contains a part of reflection on its own creative process"; 137). Thus Lisa-the-reader is confident enough to inform the narrator-writer about the style of his books, which she qualifies in the following terms:

> souvent en état de crise . . . un post-modernisme . . . y éclate de partout sur fond de conservatisme prônant la stabilité. (100)
>
> often in a state of crisis . . . a postmodernism . . . bursts forth on all sides against a background of conservatism that preaches stability.

But wherein lies that *stability,* if it exists at all? The constant *mise en abyme* and mirror reflections of book, reader, and character

15 See also page 88.

at work in this novel call to mind a *matrioshka,* the Russian doll inside which is a series of duplicate dolls in decreasing sizes, culminating in the smallest unit, the quintessential *matrioshka,* possibly itself a symbol of the ultimate book, "le livre absolu" evoked by the narrator (123). It is perhaps because of the combination of factors outlined above that novelist and critic Jean-Max Tixier has rightly dubbed *La femme d'entre les lignes* "a linguistic novel" (366), an appellation worth mulling over; witness the constant play of signifiers present in the novel and the neologisms that permeate it.[16]

Transexuer, a neologism built upon the adjective *transexuel,* referring this time to sex and gender exchange with someone else, is hinted at in the first part of the novel and constitutes a transitional point between the two sections of the narrative, foreshadowing the *migramour* of the second, with its state of flux, transfer, and interchangeability. A gender switch is already implicit and latent in the following statement by the narrator-lover: "Lisa se nourrit de mes mots comme jadis maman me nourrissait de son amour" ("Lisa feeds on my words as Mother used to feed me with her love"; 56), setting the terms of the comparison as follows: the narrator's mother/himself (as nurturing figures), on the one hand, and, on the other, Lisa/words (as nurtured child and nourishment, respectively). What is equated here, at least by inference, are the following pairs, indicative of a twinning of roles and characters alike:

16 For instance, on page 99, we have *expir* and *inspir,* in reference to the movement of waves. The nouns are derived from *expirer* and *inspirer,* verbs that refer to breathing. See also page 90, where Bouraoui creates the verb *s'élastiquer,* derived from the noun and adjective *élastique,* to mean to "stretch" or "exercise" oneself. Speaking of Lisa, the narrator writes: « Dès ma naissance . . . je me suis élastiqué dans des mots dont la vraie langue lui est inconnue » ("Ever since my birth . . . I have stretched myself in words whose real meaning are unknown to her").

1. Lisa / the narrator-child (both recipients of love/words)
2. The dual act of nurturing / being nurtured
3. The narrator-lover / a loving mother
4. Love / words
5. Words / maternal love.

From those equivalences, it seems that the narrator-lover, the purveyor of words, is also a mother figure besides being a male writer, in what constitutes another instance, amongst many, of *dédoublement*. It is during a walk on the beach with Lisa that he has the vivid impression of having exchanged bodies with her:

> Nous avons échangé nos corps. Le mien transexué en elle. Le sien transexué en moi. Permutation de sexe et d'amour . . . (38)
>
> We have exchanged our bodies. Mine transexed in her. Hers transexed in me. Permutation of sex and love . . .

Furthermore, if traditionally the writer is a male figure, the fact that Lisa mutates from reader to writer towards the end of the narrative after getting rid of her own creation, Virebaroud, means that the gender crossing has carried over once more in a manner consistent with the abovementioned foreshadowing, and that Lisa has also acquired *malehood* by *dédoublement*. The neologism *migramourir,* with its family of variants *(amourir, livr-amour, migramouriant, amourliser*) encountered throughout the novel, speaks precisely of the flux that is the essence of love, of creation; of the *migrating* nature of love; of the necessity to die (*mourir*) in order to be reborn to a new order of love (much as Lisa dies to the narrator-lover to be reborn in Lisa-Palimpsest), and of the creative process entailed in reading and writing alike, away from the stifling and petrifying effects of habituation, "la routine d'une quotidienneté maritale des plus banales" ("the most banal routine of marital daily living"; 88). This neologism also speaks of the necessity to distance oneself from erosion of

emotions, and absence of pleasure, in view of reaching a love he calls "hors norme et hors catégorie" ("exceptional and unclassifiable"; 94), one that in essence defies death:

> C'est pourquoi on peut parler d'amour « migrant » au lieu d'amour « mourant ». Le néologisme 'migramour' est parlant en ce sens. Il y a seulement permutation de sujet, non du sentiment. Et si l'on assiste à une migration horizontale sur le plan de l'action, on est en droit de se demander s'il n'existe pas quelque part une migration verticale, celle de la mémoire qui ferait remonter les traces du passé dans le temps présent. ("*La Femme d'entre les lignes*")
>
> This is why one can speak of "migrant" love instead of dying love. The neologism *migramour* is telling in this regard. There is only permutation of subject, not of feeling. And if there is at work a horizontal migration at the level of the action itself, we are entitled to wonder if there exists somewhere a vertical migration, that of memory which resurfaces traces of the past onto present time.

When speaking of Lisa, the narrator-lover says "j'amourlisais en elle" ("I was love-reading in her"; 85). The neologism *amourliser* based on the combination of the noun *amour* ("love") and *lisais* ("was reading"), which is at once the simple past of the verb *lire* ("to read") and a play on the name Lisa itself (as in *lisais*), fuses the twin actions of loving and reading on the *corps-texte* ("body-text") of the beloved. *La femme d'entre les lignes* seems to be first and foremost a quest for happiness through the power of books, an assertion that one can happily live immersed in the pleasure of reading, acting upon the text and being recreated by it *entre les lignes*. The constant linkages among the pleasure of reading, erotic love, and *amour-mots* all point in that direction. Moreover, the love of love, as when the protagonist-narrator speaks of having made of love the "passion of our lives," reminds the careful critic, once more, of Barthes's pronouncement, in

Fragments de discours amoureux, regarding what he calls "aimer l'amour" ("to love love"; 39), through which, by an amorous perversion, the object of love becomes love itself rather than the loved one.

All the themes encountered in the narrative, whether latent or explicit, including stylistic features, are subservient to and reflective of "love" and the "book." Such is the case with the intertextuality (the parody or pastiche) found in the narrative. Echoes of Baudelaire, Mallarmé, Flaubert, and Proust, as well as Pierre de Ronsard and Gérard de Nerval,[17] are scattered throughout the narrative, often with no reference to the original author, but clearly enough to point the educated reader in the intended direction. Such is the case, for instance, when talking of the role of the writer. The narrator-lover comments that the latter is constantly looking not only for "le mot juste," the famous Flaubertian phrase, but especially for the "finely chiseled poetic expression" (*l'expression poétique finement ciselée;* 81). Such is also the case when the narrator distorts the first verse of Mallarmé's poem "Brise marine," namely, "La chair est triste hélas et j'ai lu tous les livres" ("Flesh is sad, alas, and I have read all the books"), into "La chair est bistre, hélas, et il est possible de lire tous les *livramours*" ("Flesh is dark, alas, and it is possible to read all the *livramours*"; 93), without making direct reference to the symbolist poet. Other instances of intertextuality present in the novel include the expression "forêts de symboles" ("forests of symbols"), taken from Baudelaire's "Correspondances," a poem famous for establishing the premises of symbolist aesthetics. The phrase occurs on page 23 and again on page 72, where the narrator-lover speaks of "correspondances

17 On page 128, the narrator speaks of "le ténébreux, le veuf, l'inconsolé," thus quoting part of Nerval's famous opening line from "El Desdichado": « Je suis le Ténébreux, – le Veuf, – l'Inconsolé » ("I am the Desolate, – the Widowed, – the Unconsoled").

baudelairiennes" in reference to his amorous experiences with Lisa and the translation of his sensations into various echoes. The critic Claudette Broucq has aptly applied the Baudelairian symbolist correspondences to the very notion of writing as it appears in *La femme d'entre les lignes*. Trying to capture the essence of the self-reflexivity and *dédoublement* phenomena that constantly occur in the narrative, she writes:

> L'écriture ici n'a pas d'importance en soi, elle est en priorité génératrice d'un autre sens. Elle tente simplement de démontrer qu'au delà du tangible existe un monde parallèle à la fois unique et universel, certes sémantique, mais qui reste à découvrir. (82)
>
> Writing here has no importance in itself; it is primarily the generator of another meaning. It tends to demonstrate that beyond the tangible exists a parallel world, at once unique and universal, that has yet to be discovered.

The dual nature of everything permeates the narrative and conveys an atmosphere of mystery and complexity. Furthermore, we have the impression, as we advance in our reading, that *La femme d'entre les lignes* may not only be "a book about the pleasure of reading and writing" [18] but also a book about the refusal to see the literary text as an entity separated from life: hence the comment made by the narrator against "un critique 'savant' qui applique stupidement une certaine grille méthodologique" ("an 'erudite' critic who unthinkingly applies a given methodological scale"; 50).

The central allegory of the narrative places the book at the heart of existence. As such, it represents the pervasive dialectic, book/reading, and the imbrication between erotic love and the love of art rampant in the novel and which a recent critic described as "a hymn to reading" (*un hymne à la lecture;* Igonetti

18 Bouraoui, personal communication, 7 July 2007.

344).[19] From the erotic rapport between reader and writer/narrator, to the sensuality of the *corps-texte*, to the *amour-mots*, to the love of art, such is the gradual evolution at work in the narrative, with the love of art encompassing and crystallizing all former steps. The allegory occurs at the beginning of Part Two ("Migramour") where the narrator describes the Bellini triptych he happened to see during a trip to Venice. He expatiates on why he fell in love with the Madonna — on the face of whom he superposed the image of Lisa, in what makes for another duplication effect. The Virgin and Child are flanked on either side by a pair of saints, each one of whom is holding a book, closed or open, in what constitutes, in the words of the narrator, "an invitation to reading" ("une invitation à la lecture"). As the reader of this work of art, he explains:

> je ne suis pas tombé amoureux de cette femme exceptionnelle seulement pour sa beauté divine . . . mais aussi pour ces quatre lecteurs qui l'enlacent. Ce qui les unit encore davantage, ce n'est pas la ressemblance physique, mais cet air absorbé par la lecture, et cet appel à la méditation. Le Livre est au Coeur de leur vie. (110)
>
> I did not fall in love with this exceptional woman only because of her divine beauty . . . but also because of those four readers surrounding her. What brings them together more acutely is not so much their physical resemblance but rather their being absorbed by reading and meditation. The Book is at the Heart of their life.

19 Igonetti writes: « Dans cet hymne à la lecture, Bouraoui démontre qu'il aime, au sens propre du terme, écrire, qu'il en éprouve du plaisir et compte bien qu'il se manifestera dans ses livres assez de ce plaisir pour que le lecteur (tout comme Lisa, son personnage-lectrice) le partage à son tour » ("In this hymn to reading, Bouraoui shows that he loves, in the literal meaning of the word, writing; that he derives pleasure from it, and that he hopes that the reader (just as Lisa, the character-reader) will also partake in it"; 344–45).

"Four readers," "absorbed by reading and meditation," "the Book is at the Heart of their lives": those are statements that all tend to emphasize and bring forth the sacred status of, perhaps, the Gospels, but certainly, by extension, the sacred status of all books where "l'amour du beau" ("the love of beauty") — here we are reminded of Baudelaire — as well as "a vivid equation between art and love" (*l'équation entre art et amour,* 122) are part of their very fabric. From books, adds the narrator, depart and return all destinies:

> C'est du Livre que partent et reviennent les destins après les périples et les pérégrinations, les aventures et les sédentarismes, tous vécus entre les lignes. (110)
>
> It is from the Book that depart and come back destinies after all vicissitudes and peregrinations, adventures or sedentary times, all lived between the lines.

Books are essential to one's trajectory, and one could not emphasize enough the importance of creating them, perhaps as one's mission in life:

> Semer, à tous les vents, des livres inutiles d'où l'on pourra, peut-être, cueillir une fleur, une rose, une marguerite, un jasmin. (126)
>
> To sow in all winds useless books from which one could pick a flower, a rose, a daisy, a jasmine.

This seems to be the ultimate message of the strange narrator-lover and perhaps of Bouraoui himself, in what seems to form a synesthetic experience where the Barthesean *plaisir du texte* evoked at the beginning of this chapter entails a transfer, across the senses, of the *jouissance* involved in the dual/simultaneous act of reading and writing. In this regard, the following statement is pertinent indeed as a concluding remark on this novel:

> *La Femme d'entre les lignes* apparaît comme un roman initiatique si captivant que sa lecture ne souffre pas d'interruptions. Le lecteur, fasciné, passe ainsi sans transition du passé au présent, du rêve à la réalité, d'un personnage à l'autre, sans heurts ni difficultés. ("*La Femme d'entre les lignes*")
>
> *La Femme d'entre les lignes* appears as a Bildungsroman so captivating that the reading of it cannot allow for an interruption. The fascinated reader goes without transition from past to present, from dream to reality, from character to character, without difficulties or clashes.

All things considered, *La femme d'entre les lignes* may be, albeit unwittingly, a statement on literature and a reflection on language, its functions and limitations. Who is "the woman from between the lines" who gives the book its title? In this context, one is reminded of *The Treason of Images,* Magritte's famous painting of a pipe, with the caption "Ceci n'est pas une pipe" ("This is not a pipe") and the irony thus upheld. In the case of Bouraoui's metafictional novel, the title likewise seems to be a manifesto of sorts about language and the way that meaning is either transmitted or blocked by symbols. Just as a painting may not be what it represents, a novel is not what it claims to portray. *La femme d'entre les lignes* is perhaps not a novel about a woman, or about a love triangle, nor is it a novel at all, but merely a passageway in the world of illusions where things may lose their signifiers (names) or, if they maintain them, their signified (meanings) and identities get shifted or switched. Furthermore, when trying to analyze this book, the critic is constantly reminded of what Barthes has called *texte de jouissance* (a category to which *La femme d'entre les lignes* surely belongs, as noted above) as opposed to *texte de plaisir,* in that the former cannot be told. The former escapes criticism because it is untenable, impossible, and perverse (in that it is located outside all imaginable finality, even that of pleasure). These

characteristics make it unattainable except by a fellow *texte de jouissance*. Discoursing on it can only be done from within (*Le plaisir* 37–38), and, even then, there is the risk of emulating it: hence the aforementioned difficulty encountered by literary critics who try to tackle this novel.[20] The epigraph at the outset of this study, namely the Barthesean aphorism about the irreverence that should be an attribute of the literary text, is well served here by Bouraoui's writing.

The refraction and interchangeability of the characters demonstrated in *La femme d'entre les lignes* is in line with Bouraoui's rewriting of "Je est un autre" ("I is another"), Rimbaud's well-known distortion of the Cartesian aphorism. Bouraoui's "Je est nôtre" ("I is ours"), advocated in his 2005 essay, *Transpoétique* (45), incidentally subtitled *Éloge du nomadisme* ("Praise of Nomadism"), speaks of an exigency of tolerance stemming from the depth of oneself towards the unlike-oneself-Other. For, indeed, fraternity and a call for peace seem to be the quintessence of Bouraoui's postmodern legacy.

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20 Such critics as Jouve speak of « l'érotisme particulier du fouillis de l'écriture dans le texte moderne » ("the special eroticism of the hodge-podge of the style in the modern text"; 104), which leaves the reader on the lookout for the sentence, the detail, the word that will touch him or her directly and deeply.

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Mourning Lost "Others" in Ronnie Burkett's *Happy*

JANNE CLEVELAND

> The threat of death is very much bound up with the possibility of oblivion. . . . Memories of the dead . . . are as much a bulwark against the terror of the forgettable self as an inescapable aftermath of lives which have come to an end.
>
> ELIZABETH HALLAM AND JENNY HOCKEY, *Death, Memory and Material Culture* (4)

Within the field of psychoanalytic theory, the Self and the Other, as proposed by Freud, have come to be understood as mutually dependent — the Self needs the Other as a reflective surface against which the Self can be socially constituted. But what happens to the Self when the Other is no longer available,

particularly within the context of the traumatic loss of the Other through death? Further, what happens when the grieving Self cannot or will not acknowledge the loss of the Other? Is it possible to sustain the Self when mourning cannot find an end and moves into the realm of melancholia? How might memory be employed to retain the uncanny presence of the lost Other? Can the Self be secured through such processes?

In his full-length puppet play for adults, ironically titled *Happy* (2000), Canadian theatre artist and internationally renowned master puppeteer Ronnie Burkett offers these questions for consideration in his staging of the processes of grieving through which the individual subject navigates the trauma of the death of the loved Other. This essay examines how Burkett's production explores the complexities of negotiating the death of the Other through the subject/object relations inherent to puppetry, which by extension exemplify the often traumatic Self/Other relations that found and sustain the Subject/Self. Since his first international tour of the play *Tinka's New Dress*, in 1994, Ronnie Burkett Theatre of Marionettes has continued to deliver intricate and complex full-length productions for adult audiences that examine the traumas of the human condition. Burkett's *Happy* (2000) specifically focuses upon the psychic landscapes of mourning through enacting the stages of grief originally proposed by Dr. Elizabeth Kübler-Ross in *On Death and Dying* (1969).[1] Through puppetry, Burkett stages the experience and effects of loss, grieving, memory, mourning, and melancholia. In effect, Burkett's characters literally perform what has popularly become known as the stages of grief, demonstrating how the traumatic experience of the loss of the Other threatens

1 Kübler-Ross suggested that grieving encompassed five stages: (1) denial, (2) bargaining, (3) anger, (4) depression, and (5) acceptance. Variously espoused and debated, this formulation of the grieving process has come to be accepted as conventional wisdom within the pop-psych, self-help contingent of Western culture.

to derail the project of constituting and sustaining the Self. The effects of mourning and melancholia that manifest within this play reveal the extent to which such loss signals an underlying and overwhelming fear that the Self alone cannot remain intact. Through *Happy* we come to see how the processes of mourning are also constitutive and sustaining of the Subject/Self in the traumatic encounter with death.

Burkett created *Happy* after the suicide of a good friend, precipitated by the death of her husband. This production, which premiered in April 2000 in Toronto, responds to his own experience of mourning that encouraged him to "wonder aloud why happiness is perceived as something only the chosen few get" (Donnelly). In *Happy,* Burkett explores this question through a community of misfit characters whose various strategies for coping with such a loss demonstrate the uses and limits of popular psychology in response to grief. At the same time, *Happy* invokes the more nuanced underpinnings of psychoanalytic theory, thus offering an interweaving of pop culture and intellectual endeavour through which to explore the difficult negotiations of Self/Other relations made more anxious within the context of mourning.

As performing objects — that is, objects consciously invested with life by the puppeteer and the audience — puppets are in a unique position to mediate the difficult terrains of loss and longing brought to the fore with the death of a loved one. As extensions of human expression, puppets are, by their very nature as animated inanimate objects, already predisposed to evoke the uncanny, that which is at once familiar and unfamiliar. The characters in this play purposefully draw our attention to this notion of uncanniness and its relation to mourning through the twin lens of loss and grief. The interplay of a range of dialectic considerations — mourning/melancholia, subject/object, animate/inanimate, Self/Other — that circulate

within this production invite the audience to examine its own relationships to the Other within the psychic landscape of bereavement.

STAGING MOURNING

Set within the community of a rooming house in western Canada, this play illustrates what happens when a rupture occurs in the reciprocal relations between Self and Other. The characters are a collection of social outcasts that include Happy, a war veteran; Raymond, the elderly caretaker; Ricky, a flamboyantly gay shampoo boy and his boyfriend, Kenny; Lucille, a chain-smoking senior; and Carla, a young poet, along with her husband, Drew. With the unexpected death of Drew at the top of the play, Carla descends into a psychic space of grief that takes us into a realm of memory inhabited by the uncanny. Narrated by the title character, the action of the play slips between two stage worlds: Carla's external reality as a grieving young widow among the members of the rooming house community and the interior space of her unconscious where she tries to come to terms with Drew's death. The two spaces are distinguished on stage through the use of a revolving cabinet, which is tellingly described by the theatre critic Lyn Gardner as "a kind of keep-tidy of the psyche, where memories can be tidied away into drawers." One side of the cabinet presents the rooming house playing space, while the other manifests the world of the Gray Cabaret, where we see the various stages of Carla's grief enacted. Described in the stage directions as a "neutral realm" (15) that only comes into play when a traumatic event evokes an overwhelming memory, the Gray Cabaret is hosted by the campy and clownish figure of Antoine Marionette.

Like the eighteenth-century French queen that his name recalls, Antoine's visage conjures notions of excess, dressed as

Figure 1. Antoine Marionette. Photograph by Trudi Lee, courtesy of the Ronnie Burkett Theatre of Marionettes.

he is in lacy knee-breeches, a fitted lace jacket heavily flounced at the sleeves and ruffled at the neck, and high-heeled buckle shoes; a froth of silver hair with a black stripe through the centre completes the look. The unrelieved monochromatic silver-gray tones of his costume, along with the wash of neutral, gray tones of the cabaret, are contrasted against the playing space of the "real" world of the rooming house, which is marked by a variety of colours that evoke the multifaceted richness of everyday life.

In his role as the cabaret host, Antoine Marionette presents as an androgynous Grim Reaper, a sardonic emblem of Death who wittily introduces each of the acts about to be staged. Each of the four cabaret performers represents a separate stage of grief, and these representations are doubly mediated by the fact

that the "actors" are puppets and thus "dead" figures themselves that subvert the trauma of loss through a humorous distortion that makes such an emotionally fraught experience more bearable. Thus, chanteuse Cleo Payne represents the stage of denial; opera singer Maureen Massey-Ferguson leads us through the bargaining phase; cellist Jacqueline Dupressed explores the darkness of depression; and lounge singer Perry Homo croons toward acceptance of a harsh reality. For an audience familiar with the celebrities upon whom each character is based,[2] such parody accentuates the comic aspect of what could otherwise be a painful exploration of bereavement and loss. The ironic representations of the cabaret performers and their satirical musical numbers function to keep the audience at a safe emotional distance from such trauma while still drawing our attention to its effects.

For example, in his introduction to the act depicting depression, Antoine Marionette observes that while most people can empathize with Carla's state to some degree, there is a limit to our compassion:

> But really, after a while it gets so boring. And have you noticed the funny thing about depressed people? They never stay at home and work it out there . . . You're at a cocktail party, for example, canapé in hand, drink in the other. Someone comes up to you and you say, "How are you?", they say "I'm depressed," you say "I have to go," they say "Read my journal" and you say "Stab me in the face with a fork instead!" (50–51)

2 Cleo Payne is a reference to the black English jazz singer and actress Cleo Laine (b. 1927); Maureen Massey-Ferguson is a composite of renowned Canadian opera singer Maureen Forrester (b. 1930) and the Canadian manufacturer of farm equipment, Massey-Ferguson; Jacqueline Dupressed refers to the English cellist Jacqueline DuPré (1945–1987), whose illustrious career was cut short by multiple sclerosis; and Perry Homo references the popular American singer Perry Como (1912–2001), who was known for his style as a crooner.

Couched behind such caustic jesting, this scene reflects not only a fear of being unable to relieve someone else's torment but also, by extension, the unhappy fact that each of us is alone with our own traumas. In the face of the knowledge that we are alone and powerless to change or control the loss experienced at the death of a loved one, the next stage in the grieving process, according to Kübler-Ross, is anger at having been left behind. In *Happy,* this stage is enacted by hand puppets of Carla and Drew performing in the style of the famous English puppet couple Punch and Judy. That the stage of anger should be performed in Punch and Judy fashion has much resonance, given the tradition of anarchic violence associated with such performances.

Burkett follows the course of a typical English Punch and Judy show, adapting the story to the circumstances of this play.[3] For example, here it is Judy who vengefully runs amok, beating Mr. Punch mercilessly. As the scene progresses, the vocal distinction between the characters of Punch/Judy and Drew/Carla becomes less defined, until each has reassumed his/her own voice and speech patterns. The scene evokes a dreamlike blurring of past/present, fantasy/reality, that takes place within

3 In a typical English Punch and Judy show, Mr. Punch is pitted in a violent battle with one other character at a time, typically beginning with his wife, Judy. With gleeful intent, Punch kills Judy and their baby and then is often chased by the police constable, the doctor, and often the Devil himself — all of whom he beats to death with his slapstick. In many contemporary versions, Mr. Punch does ultimately get caught and punished for his deeds, but the satirical sensibility that is the legacy of these performances remains intact. For a comprehensive examination of the Punch and Judy tradition in England, see George Speaight's *Punch and Judy: A History*. Burkett's use of these characters departs from the tradition in that, whereas conventional Punch and Judy characters never actually die — they return again and again despite the violent acts perpetrated against them — Burkett's puppets in *Happy* do present traumatic and tragic scenes of death and grief.

the psyche of the bereaved widow whose anger finally erupts as uncontrolled fury:

CARLA. Mr. Punch! Mr. Punch, where are you?!

DREW. Ah Judy, my beautiful wife! Give us a little kiss then.

CARLA. A kiss?

. . .

CARLA. You want a kiss?

DREW. Oh yes, my blushing bride.

CARLA. 'Tis not a blush you rogue, 'tis anger you see 'pon my cheek.

DREW. And what a lovely cheek it is! Give mine a kiss then!

CARLA. I will brush your cheek, you rake. Take that! (*She slaps him)* And another, lest you forget the sting of my passion!

DREW. Judy, my shrewish spouse, like why do you visit these furies upon me, man? (30–31)

At this point Drew resumes his own speech pattern and addresses Carla/Judy as Carla. Carla, however, continues to slap him for having tricked her, and when he protests that he didn't deceive her, she replies:

CARLA. Liar! To think that you could so easily slip from our marital knot. A knot which now chokes like a noose around me! (*She hits him again*)

DREW. Stop it, Carla!

CARLA. Carla? No, I am Judy, hear me roar!

DREW. No baby, you're Carla. Come on, Carla, forgive me. (*She throws him to the ground and stands over him*)

CARLA. Why should I absolve you, asshole?

DREW. Because I died, baby. (32)

At this point, the stage directions indicate that *"the hand puppet of Drew slips off, revealing Ronnie's bare hand"* whereupon Carla begins to savagely beat the hand while angrily screaming "I hate you!" (32). What is particularly interesting here is that not only do we witness the enactment of Carla's rage, but we see it through multiple frames in a trajectory that leads from Burkett as actor/puppeteer to Carla and Drew through which (whom?) Burkett's acting is delivered down to the characters of Punch and Judy, who further mediate the puppet performances of the Carla and Drew figures, and is then returned to Burkett — or rather, to Burkett's hand. These multiple frames of performance, which culminate in the "unmasking" of the hand in conjunction with Drew's reminder that he is dead, move us away from the realm of pop culture to invoke a more profound reading of grief that signals the uncanny — that is "a particular commingling of the familiar and the unfamiliar" (Royle 1) in which absence is paradoxically and simultaneously foregrounded as presence.

ENTER THE UNCANNY: THE PRESENCE OF (LOST) OBJECTS

In this instance, Burkett's hand marks a double signification as both part of the puppeteer and the dead body of Drew. Like viewing a corpse, there is an unsettling defamiliarization that takes place; the thing before us *looks* like something we know, but is not. The failure of the integrity of boundaries between things so common to puppetry results in the collapsing of the psychic distance between puppet and puppeteer and thus signals the conflicted and complex relations between subjects and objects echoed in Self/Other relations. Through the direction of the puppeteer, "the puppet is a willing pawn serving the needs of stories and life lessons . . . without disrupting its sense of coherence as character, because its life is provisional"

(Zelevansky 272). It is, of course, this very provisionality of the puppet's existence — its life — that marks it as uncanny in the first instance.

As performing objects, puppets are inherently linked to the uncanny, giving free rein to the imagination well beyond the capabilities of human actors. Puppet plays have an advantage over live-actor theatre because, "since the puppet is not human to begin with, and the audience accepts this fact, the most outrageous flights of fancy can be indulged in without putting any undue strain on the audience's imagination" (Bramall 12). Despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary — Burkett's continuous presence among the puppets on stage, for instance — audiences remain committed to the fantasy of the "liveness" of the puppet, at least during the performance. The contested duality of subject/object relations — a duality that has a parallel in Self/Other dynamics — is signified by the fact that Burkett's hand is simultaneously part of his own human body and the "dead" body of a puppet character and supports the notion that "the puppet's abstracted signs of life provoke the process of double-vision" (Tillis 115). Moreover, it is notable in that "the notion that puppets provide a relatively unmediated access to the 'other scene' of the subconscious thus reveals itself as inseparable from, or transparent with, the conceptual hierarchy of theatrical representation" (Laplanche and Pontalis, qtd. in Shershow 224–25). In terms of theatrical representation, where the doubling of the actor/character is always already an intrinsic aspect of performance, Burkett pushes this concept even further in *Happy,* when we are not only reminded that Drew is dead but also that, as a puppet, he was never truly alive in the first place. Thus, we find ourselves in the realm of the uncanny, in which we encounter "a strangeness of framing and borders, an experience of liminality" (Royle 2). At the liminal threshold of living / not living, where the uncanny nature of puppets gestures toward the

contested borders between fantasy/reality, subject/object, and Self/Other, there is a further disjunction channelled through a narrative in which other characters in this play only inhabit the performance as the dead, held in the realm of the living through the work of memory.

MEMORY, MOURNING, AND MELANCHOLIA

Through the title character's narration, we discover that while the characters of Lucille and Kenny physically manifest on stage as the embodied desires upon which Raymond's and Ricky's subjectivity depends, they are, in fact, dead. Raymond and Ricky reconstruct memories in a never entirely successful attempt to disavow past loss in order to sustain the reciprocal Self/Other relations that enable the constitution of Self. As Happy tells Carla:

> Ricky doesn't like to look in the mirror, Carla, because what he sees makes him sad. . . . So Kenny became his mirror. Someone who will stand right there in front of him and reflect him, and never leave. . . . So Kenny still lives here with us. (63)

Ironically, in his refusal to say goodbye to Kenny, who we are told has been dead for three years, Ricky is representative of the melancholic of Freudian psychoanalysis, who

> displays something else besides which is lacking in mourning — an extraordinary diminution in his self-regard, an impoverishment of his ego on a grand scale. In mourning it is the world which has become poor and empty; in melancholia it is the ego itself. ("Mourning and Melancholia" 254)

As a melancholic figure, Ricky's refusal to let go of his dead boyfriend is clearly based on his need of the Other who, like

a mirror, stabilizes a reflection of the Self Ricky most desires. However, according to Freud's hypothesis, the relation of the Self to the lost Other is complicated by ambivalence, that is, the contest between love and hate that operates in most relationships characterized by a high investment of feeling ("Mourning and Melancholia" 266).[4] Thus, when Carla observes that Ricky doesn't even like Kenny, Happy reminds us that "not all memories are good ones dear. Sometimes we hold onto the bad ones just to remind ourselves why we're so miserable" (63). The memories Ricky constructs to sustain the fiction of Kenny's presence operate here to maintain a phantasmatic past he has employed to constitute a Self that disavows his own background as a mixed-race Chinese-Native Canadian from Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan.

Midway through the play, when Ricky's parents arrive to take him "home" to Moose Jaw, he tells his Chinese mother that "the day I left that town you both became dead to me. . . . You're dead to me! Now go away and stay dead" (47). He tells us that "I'd fucking die if I couldn't be who I'm pretending to be" (48). Although Ricky acknowledges his pretence, the fantasy that he is Puerto Rican, and that Kenny is not dead but his mother and father are, represents a melancholic flight of imagination that is at the core of his identity. For Ricky, this conflicted relationship — he does admit that his parents probably mean well after his mother has exited — demonstrates a deep ambivalence that is never resolved, an ambivalence from which, as Judith Butler suggests, "there is no reprieve" (193).

4 In his essay "Two Classes of Instincts," Freud clarifies his usage of the term *ambivalence*: "Clinical observation shows not only that love is with unexpected regularity accompanied by hate (ambivalence), and not only that in human relationships hate is frequently a forerunner of love, but also that in a number of circumstances hate changes into love and love into hate" (383).

Similarly, Raymond's memories of Lucille reveal a level of ambivalence that produces the tensions of a highly conflicted relationship. From the beginning of the play — when Raymond makes his first appearance on his daily journey to the store to pick up rations, "in case of global disaster" (9) — his strained relationship with Lucille is conspicuous, as we see in the following exchange:

> LUCILLE. Raymond, pick me up a pack of smokes.
>
> RAYMOND. I most certainly will not do anything of the kind, Lucille.
>
> LUCILLE. Aw c'mon, don't be such a goody two-shoes, Raymond. I need a pack of smokes!
>
> RAYMOND. You need to stop smoking Lucille.
>
> LUCILLE. What's it going to do? Kill me? (5–6)

This question elicits laughter since, as a puppet, Lucille is not really alive in the first place. However, when it is revealed that Lucille died many years ago, the full force of the irony resonates on multiple levels. We discover that it is only through Raymond's imagined memories that Lucille inhabits the space of the rooming house community at all. He tells us that he has kept those he loves intact by "remember[ing] them all back to life" (56). We discover that Raymond originally learned this strategy by disavowing the knowledge that his mother died in childbirth. Throughout the play, Raymond continually quotes advice from the mother he never knew as a strategy for coping with his overwhelming sense of her abandonment of him. For example, he tells us:

> My mother always said, "You're an empty-headed dreamer you are, Raymond. Someday you'll wake up my lad, and your dreams

> won't be able to comfort you then. I should know, I almost died because of you." She told me that all the time. (56)

Ultimately, however, this coping mechanism fails to offer the comfort Raymond seeks. In order to free himself from "all those memories I've made up that won't be quiet and let me rest" (56), he finally begins to confront the knowledge he has been disavowing, noting of his mother that:

> She died because of me. Not almost, like she tells me now, but really. Died, when I was born. A little baby, all alone in all that awful light. But I couldn't be alone. I couldn't be just me, just Raymond. So as soon as I could understand it I started to remember it. But not the real way. My way. Raymond's way. It's better that way, because now no one ever leaves me. They can't. (56)

Raymond's conflicted navigation of loss exemplifies the thinking of feminist scholar Cassie Premo Steele, who notes:

> Either the loss can be dealt with by introjection, by letting the reality of the loss settle upon the psyche, which opens the way for possibility of internalization of the lost object, allowing it to become part of the subject — or the loss can be dealt with by negation, by rejecting the loss within the psyche, which closes the door to internalization, and results in a hardening of the subject. (5)

Raymond's admission that he has consciously constructed memories marks the beginning of a process that effectively opens up the possibility of constituting a subject position that incorporates the lost Other, as Premo-Steele suggests. Until Raymond finally embraces the truth that his relationships with his mother and Lucille are fabricated, both phantasmatic women dominate him in ways that manifest themselves in verbal cruelty: Lucille

derides and calls him names, while his mother's counsel carries with it a continual undercurrent of ridicule. Rather than what could simply be read as an instance of misogynist representation of strong female characters as overbearing bitches, we witness instead the mechanisms of ego defence in relation to loss, wherein, as Freud suggests:

> The conflict due to ambivalence gives a pathological cast to mourning and forces it to express itself in the form of self-reproaches to the effect that the mourner himself is to blame for the loss of the loved object, i.e., that he has *willed* it. ("Mourning and Melancholia" 256–60; emphasis added)

Thus, for Raymond, there is a conflict between anger and loyalty. He is angered at being abandoned by those with whom he most desires a connection, and he turns his anger inward to sustain a commitment to his love objects. Further, there is evidence of guilt feelings having to do with the deaths of Lucille and Raymond's mother. Significantly, Raymond remarks that his mother died *because of him,* which paradoxically sets up loss as the constitutive factor that determines his precarious sense of Self. Raymond's subjectivity is overlaid from the beginning with the conflicted tensions of anger and guilt. Not only, then, does his mother die "because of him," but it is also implied that had he only acted sooner, Lucille might not have died how and when she did.

Late in the play, Happy reveals that on the night of Lucille's death, a young, painfully shy and lovesick Raymond had followed her out of a dance hosted by the town to celebrate the return of the soldiers from World War II. Raymond watched Lucille drive off with her handsome dance partner toward the accident that would take her life. Happy ruminates at one point that, had Raymond been able to summon the courage to

intercept the couple on the dance floor that night, "who knows what might have happened" (59). Instead, standing in the parking lot, Raymond found Lucille's discarded dress lying in a heap and chose to keep it as a way of holding onto her. Raymond tells Carla, "I guess I thought that if I held it close enough it would never go away" (61).

As a means of constituting an alternate reality in which the loved Other has not been lost, memory is a particularly effective means of revising reality. As Freud observes, "memory . . . has an unlimited receptive capacity for new perceptions and nevertheless lays down permanent — *even though not unalterable* — memory-traces of them" ("The 'Mystic Writing-Pad'" 430; emphasis added). These memories, however, ultimately fail to satisfy Ricky and Raymond, as they must if we are to accept the Freudian hypothesis that

> each single one of the memories and situations of expectancy which demonstrate the libido's attachment to the lost object is met by the verdict of reality that the object no longer exists; and the ego, confronted as it were with the question whether it shall share this fate, is persuaded by the sum of the narcissistic satisfactions it derives from being alive to sever its attachment to the object that has been abolished. ("Mourning and Melancholia" 265)

If, then, as Freud suggests, acknowledging the loss of the Other poses a threat to the ego's integrity, the ego must disavow that object and find a new Object/Other to which it can attach. Where Freud first proposed a pathological model of melancholia that is always and only destructive to the Self, however, the contemporary field of psychoanalysis is rethinking the notion that the goal of mourning is to achieve the complete detachment from a deceased love object (Baker 55).

Drawing upon the object-relations work of Melanie Klein,

psychologist John Baker suggests that successful — read healthy — mourning focuses on "preserving and restoring the internal object relationship in the mourner's personality" (61). As a process not of detachment but of transformation of the relationship to the lost love object, the bereaved person is able "to maintain some tie with the inner representation of the love object but . . . also form investment in new relationships and new activities" (Baker 68). Unlike instances in which an overabundance of mourning occurs, Baker suggests that, by maintaining an internal relationship through image and memory of the deceased,

> the bereaved individual could, at times of stress, turn in fantasy to that inner object representation and experience some of the same emotional nurturance and reassurance that the object would have provided were he or she still alive. Widows or widowers who review the events of the day in their imagination with the person who died . . . are using the internal relationship to define and maintain their sense of self-identity. (69)

This fantastical internal relationship to the deceased is often supported by the presence of an object associated with him or her. Happy, for example tells us that after his wife's death, he removed all the plastic furniture covers that she had insisted upon, but "sometimes when I miss that woman, I go to furniture stores. And I sit on the brand new sofas and chairs that are covered in plastic. Just to remember her" (73). Unlike Raymond and Ricky, who employ memory to disavow their loss of the loved Other, Happy employs an object that reminds him through its presence of his dead wife's absence. By remembering her in this way, Happy — without attempting to disavow the reality of his wife's physical death — maintains the internal relationship of which Baker speaks.

In her examination of the complexities of memory and mourning, Laura Tanner notes: "Memory cannot speak the body's past presence without highlighting its present sensory inaccessibility; in doing so, memory participates in blurring the very dynamics of absent presence it should, in Freud's model, help to clarify" (95). The limits of memory, as Tanner points out, are such that the act of remembering the lost person/object continuously reminds us of the loss from which we seek to escape. And while Freud's formulation of the operations of mourning is a useful starting place, Tanner reminds us, as Freudian psychoanalytic theory fails to do, that the death of a loved one represents not just a psychical loss but equally an *embodied* loss. As she observes, "the consolation of representation dissolves into its opposite as imagistic presence only highlights embodied absence" (108). Although Lucille and Kenny appear on stage, we are ultimately made aware that these presences are chimerical at best. Thus, while Ricky struggles to continue the fantasy of Kenny's presence, the comfort that Raymond initially finds in keeping Lucille alive through his imaginative work of memory cannot be sustained and finally can only remind him continuously of his loss. As a memento of that loss, the dress Lucille leaves behind on the night of her death signifies both her material absence and her uncanny presence. It ultimately becomes an object that can "lend grief a form that exposes rather than compensates for bodily absence" (Tanner 178). The difficulty of navigating loss that is felt at both a psychical and, equally importantly, at a physical level becomes apparent in the ways that materiality is accented throughout the production.

BODILY PRESENCE

The scene in which the title character Happy is introduced takes as its focus the body and bodily functions. Happy draws our attention to the bodily processes of elimination that are simultaneously analogous to the psychical processes of letting go. In a direct address to the audience, for example, Happy announces "I feel great today. Had myself a great big bowel movement this morning" (3). Given the typical Western response to the body, and most particularly the disavowal of bodily functions having to do with the elimination of waste, Happy's observations of our relationship to both the detritus and the processes of expulsion elicit an uncomfortable laughter mixed with the audience's awareness that the puppet bodies on stage are not subject to the organic operations of the human body. Not only does Happy remind us of the human body's materiality and functioning — uncannily so, since his own body is a wooden construction — but also that it is matter that is socially and culturally invested with meaning. It is not insignificant that Drew's death comes during a moment of sexual encounter, signifying both bodily function and the limits of the body. Both Drew's unexpected death, which signals the transformation from the desiring body to the monstrous (dead) body, and Happy's acknowledgement of his aging body, demonstrate the ease with which the body crosses the liminal boundary between subject and object in this play.

The liminal place that marks the space between subject and object concerns the space — and the condition — of the abject. Of the abject, Julia Kristeva informs us:

> The corpse (or cadaver: *cadere,* to fall), that which has irremediably come a cropper, is cesspool, is death; it upsets even more violently the one who confronts it as fragile and fallacious chance. . . . As in true theatre, without makeup or masks, refuse and corpses *show me* what I permanently thrust aside in order to live. (3; emphasis in the original)

Not only, then, is the dead body an abject thing, as Burkett's hand metonymically becomes in its manifestation as a signifier of Drew's dead body, it is also a thing that reminds us of our own fragility as human beings, where the move from subject to object to abject is the only certainty, and one that is entirely out of our control. When Happy draws our attention to his aging body, we are confronted with a body whose fluids and functions signify its decay — despite the fact that the puppet body has no fluids, cannot produce waste, have sex, procreate, or die. Perhaps even more disconcerting is that this character reminds us of the fact of our own deterioration and imminent death. Loss, therefore, is not simply experienced as the loss of the loved object — which, in itself, can be devastating enough — but also it is a threat of the breakdown of the Self at two levels that includes both the psychical and the physical. On the former level, the threat of Self dissolution comes through the recognition that the Self needs an Other, now lost to us in death, through which to be constituted in the first instance. On the physical level, there is the realization that all organic matter is finite, and as such the body is simply another "thing" that will erode and eventually cease to be. The body — like the puppet — thus, operates as a multiple signifier; that is, it simultaneously gestures to its links not only with subjects, objects, and that which is abject, but also with the uncanny, and the fetish.

REMEMBERING THE LOST (FETISH) OBJECT

Within the context of mourning, then, there are (at least) two bodies: the body grieving and the body grieved over. With the loss of the object, the Self loses the Other against which it knows itself as a subject in the first place. In this instance it is not uncommon for the subject, the grieving body, to take other objects as substitutes — fetish objects, if you will — to stand in

for the body grieved over, the loved and lost Other.[5] Serving as a "material bridge to a lost body" (Tanner 177), such mementos demonstrate E. L. McCallum's contention that "fetishism makes such a satisfying and successful strategy for negotiating loss, since it provides a structure for the fetishist to work through loss rather than avoid it" (141). In this way, the fetish object can provide the one grieving with a material marker that signals both the reality of loss and the fantasy of connection to the lost Other through whom subjectivity and identity are established and sustained. In her extensive study of the function of the fetish object, McCallum suggests that within the context of bereavement, fetishism presents a parallel to melancholia "since both are object-relations that produce subjects and both are strategies subjects use to negotiate loss" (110). As she further notes, "Both fetishism and melancholia involve a loss of a loved object (possibly only at the level of the unconscious), a memorialization of the loss, an ambivalence about knowing that loss, and a lack of shame in one's conduct in resolving that loss" (116).

According to McCallum, the fetish object offers another means by which to mediate the effect of loss because "while the melancholic counters loss of an object with retreat from the object to focus on the loss, the fetishist substitutes the loss with something that can provide satisfaction, thus moving past the lost object" (118). Thus the fetishist, unlike the melancholic, can remain connected to the world around him or her through establishing a relationship to an altered reality. For Raymond, then, Lucille's discarded dress becomes the fetish, the object of cathexis; that is, it presents as the fetishistic site of desire through which fantasy and reality converge and

5 Here I am employing a definition of the fetish drawn from E. L. McCallum's *Object Lessons: How to Do Things with Fetishism,* which suggests a broad understanding of the fetish as an object that substitutes for a particular thing or "other" that has been lost to the subject.

overlap. The trajectory here in which Raymond's melancholic fetishism is enacted is similarly experienced by the audience who witness the move in which Lucille's (uncanny) materiality becomes reduced to that of her dress as a signifier of her presence, and finally her total absence from the scene when Raymond acknowledges her death. For Raymond, Lucille's dress becomes the object that signifies his grief, and allows him — for a time — to transcend and disavow Lucille's death as well as the inevitability of his own. Holding onto Lucille's discarded dress, Raymond (re)constitutes Lucille's presence through memory, but it is a presence that simultaneously denotes her absence. This embodied memory allows Raymond to temporarily negotiate through disavowal the debilitating loss that the death of Lucille represents for him. Ultimately, Raymond chooses to release his hold on the fetishistic connection to the imaginary realm wherein Lucille is configured as a loved object — particularly since, in this case, the object punishes the desiring subject by continually reminding him of what he can never truly possess. As a means of breaking the fetishistic connection he gives the dress to Carla.

In the scene in which Raymond makes a gift of the dress to Carla — where both are so absorbed in their own grieving that, according to the stage directions *"they are together but separate in their own thoughts*" — Raymond explains to Carla that "just because I have this . . . thing, doesn't make it real. Not real like it was. Real like I wanted it to be. But no amount of wanting, no amount of time, could ever make it into something it wasn't" (61). While giving up the fetish object is a difficult but necessary act for Raymond, moving beyond melancholia proves to be an impossible task for Carla.

Carla cannot or will not sustain her own sense of Self without the presence of Drew; nor is she able to remember him sufficiently to maintain his presence. She tells Raymond that

"with every minute passing, ticking me further and further away, I can't remember all of him. Parts and pieces, but not everything that made him Drew" (43). Like Raymond, Carla assumes responsibility for having lost the object of her love. She tells Raymond "I didn't memorize him. And so he's slipping away from me again. I've killed him all over again" (43). Consumed by grief that threatens the stability of her own subject position, Carla exemplifies the processes of grief that Freud suggests becomes melancholia when the person grieving gives over to "an exclusive devotion to mourning which leaves nothing over for other purposes or interests" ("Mourning and Melancholia" 252). In a bid to sustain his presence, Carla later dons the sweater Drew was wearing when he died. This attempt to reconstitute him, however, is unsuccessful, and in the end she leaves the sweater for Raymond as a memento. Unable to reconcile the loss of the loved Other, she chooses to commit suicide by hanging herself, whereupon she moves into the realm of the Gray Cabaret. Here Antoine tells her: "You're one of us now, Carla. Go take your place in the wings until someone remembers you" (69). According to this logic, Carla will be reanimated through memory by those who choose to recall her — in this case those in the audience, who have collectively agreed to forego the usual demands of the real world in order to invest in and make connections with the characters on stage. Carla's death resonates most powerfully for audience members, who have been present during her grieving processes and have witnessed her suicide. Following Carla's death scene we are reminded that we are able to retain our lost objects — and thus our own subjectivity — only through the dual operations of memory and fantasy.

Within the realm of theatre, and certainly across multiple levels in puppet theatre, it is fantasy that structures the dynamic field between Self/Other, subject/object, that makes possible the impossible — the fantastic — in the first place.

Further, the processes of identification and mimesis associated with performance and dramatization echo the psychic operations of projection and introjection that establish the ground upon which Self/Other relations are enacted, and it is these processes that enable the audience to "forget" the inanimate nature of Burkett's characters. Dramatic performance lends itself specifically to such negotiations as those that transpire between the Self and the Other precisely because it takes place within the realm of fantasy, which in turn opens a channel to the desires of the unconscious. At the heart of the matter in terms of mourning, then, the function of fantasy may well be to maintain a connection to others — including those whose loss we mourn — in order to sustain a sense of Self.

Within the context of puppet theatre generally, and this play in particular, Burkett's characters provide a material bridge that operates akin to fetish objects in that they signal an overlap between subject/object that extends to Self/Other relations. In *Happy,* we see how reciprocal relationships are continually put in the service of constituting both the Other and the Self. While mourning is a difficult encounter — one which most of us would avoid, if it were possible — it is also a productive encounter through which the necessarily reciprocal relations of Self/Other are established in public acts and rituals that signify grief, absence, and longing. Not only do such public acts and rituals provide the opportunity for the interactions that in part establish the Self; equally, such moments of reciprocal exchange reinforce community — that is, the gathering of individual subjects within a larger collective framework of many "Others." In *Happy,* we are asked to contemplate the Self/Other relations staged before us in communities — both on and off stage — bound together through encounters with grief and mourning.

DRIVING TOWARD HOPE

Mourning is perhaps the most difficult of traumas for the ego to negotiate, and also one of the most necessary. How we go about navigating such difficult terrain may vary, but the aim is always the same: transcending and/or surviving the loss of the loved object, the Other against whom we measure our sense of identity and worth. The primary difficulty here, as Peter Schwenger remarks, is that "the 'Other' is, of course, us, the subjects who seek to apprehend an object's being, and who realize at some level that connection can never be made. Yet the very moment when this lack of connection is realized creates an emotional connection" (7). Within this desire for connection, which reinforces the subject's own sense of being, mourning becomes a pivotal and painful process — one that paradoxically constitutes plenitude through loss. As psychoanalytic theorist Adam Phillips remarks:

> Certainly mourning can sometimes feel like a punishment for our attachments. . . . The stubborn fact of loss, its unspeakableness, sets limits to invention, even if the prodigality of loss in any life, and the necessity of our own death, also prompts our resources. Our ingenuity lies in turning losses into gains. (79)

We see in *Happy* the difficult negotiations of loss and mourning that manifest themselves in a variety of ways — Raymond's initial disavowal and final acceptance; Ricky's sustained disavowal and escape into fantasy; Carla's inability to move beyond grief — and culminate at the end of the play in the hope, perhaps born of resignation and determination, that is necessary to engage fully with life.

MOVING ON

In the final scene, Happy relates the tragic event of the death of his only child. Shortly after the end of the Second World War, his young son plummeted from the roof of their house in an attempt to fly. Happy recounts how his wife, Mae, blamed him for the death of their son, who had eagerly listened to his father's stories of wartime fliers winging their way through the open skies. While his wife became bitter, Happy resigned himself to continuing on in the hope that things between them would improve. Although the dialogue presents the anxiety and despair of mourning, the presence of Happy in a *"bright yellow rain slicker, a sou'wester hat and rubber gum boots"* (70) suggests hope in the face of loss. Pragmatically, Happy contends that "the way I see it, if you want the rainbow, then you've gotta put up with the rain" (73). Ruminating from his position on a park swing, he tells us that

> I get a lot of privacy on days like this. I don't know if it's because people are afraid of the sight of an old fart dressed up like a goddam duck — pardon my French — or if they just know to leave a dreamer well enough alone while he's at work. . . . Some people might think that my reach exceeds my grasp. Well, pardon my French, but isn't that the whole goddam point of being alive? (74)

Reinforcing the notion of hope in this final scene, the lighting moves from a wash on the back screen of *"blazing pink and clouds"* to *"the colours of the rainbow flag"* while the *"music swells as Happy swings higher and higher"* (74).[6] The colourful lighting design, combined with the suggested mise-en-scène of a

6 The inclusion of the colours of the rainbow flag — evocative of gay pride — reinforces notions of "otherness" and difference co-existing within a diverse community of subjects.

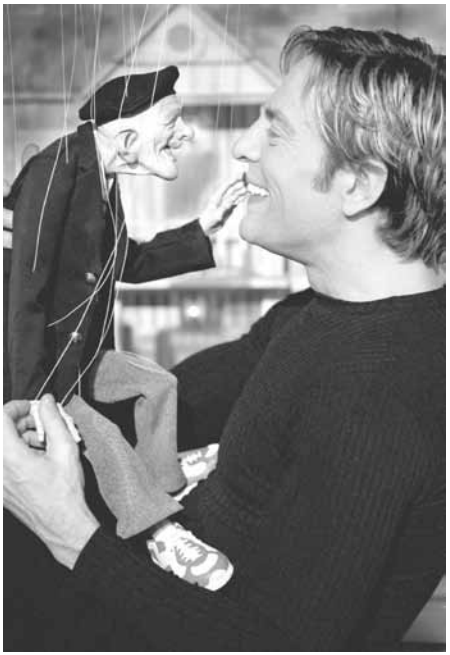

Figure 2. Happy and Ronnie. Photograph by Trudi Lee, courtesy of the Ronnie Burkett Theatre of Marionettes.

rainy day — a trope that has traditionally signified growth and rebirth — brings the play to a close on a hopeful note.[7]

With its focus on grief and the uncanny Others for whom we mourn — the ones who are simultaneously absent and present in memory — *Happy* signals the contradictory disjunction between hope and despair that marks the connection of subject/object, and by extension Self/Other. As Schwenger reminds us,

7 While some reviewers accuse the production of sentimentality, London theatre critic Lyn Gardner notes that *Happy* works precisely because it is unapologetically sentimental. After all, what could be more sentimental than hope in our contemporary moment?

the corpse is the object that mediates the space between life and death, bearing as it does "the imprint of a residual subjectivity" (157).[8] The fear of loss of a coherent subjectivity — this turn from subject to object — is most disturbing to the psyche, as it reminds us of our own imminent decline. As uncanny figures, the corpse and the puppet — residing, as they both do, in the liminal space between being and non-being — bring us into contact with the anxious negotiations of subjectivity that are made more fraught within the psychic landscape of mourning and remind us that there is no Self/Subject without its Object/Other. Within this encounter with mourning and the pain of remembering, *Happy* challenges the audience to confront its own fears of loss — most particularly the loss of the Self. And although these puppet characters can never truly lose selves that they don't own but are instead momentarily granted through the collusion of the audience and the puppeteer, they remind us throughout the performance that loss can never be truly transcended. It can only be reconciled by recognizing the Other as necessary in the relational dynamics of sociality in which the subject comes into being.

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8 How like one of Burkett's puppet characters this sounds — being both and neither subject or object but some vestiges of both during the performance.

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Putting an End to Recycled Violence in Colleen Wagner's *The Monument*

GILBERT McINNIS

Colleen Wagner's *The Monument* won Canada's Governor General's Award for Best Play in 1996. Writing in 2004, critic Colin Thomas described the two-character play as "a dark fantasy inspired by the war — or more specifically, the war crimes — in the former Yugoslavia." Similarly, Joshua Tanzer's review of a New York production in 2000 was captioned: "A soldier accused of war crimes is unexpectedly saved from execution only to be delivered into a life of torment at the hands of a mysterious woman in the powerfully written and superbly acted Bosnia-inspired play *The Monument*." The two reviewers thus concurred that the war in Yugoslavia inspired Wagner to write the play.

However accurate these two opinions are, as of yet there has been little consideration about the possibility that Wagner was

inspired by events in her native country: the 1989 killing, by Marc Lépine, of fourteen female students at Montréal's École polytechnique. Shortly after the massacre, a group of women decided to create a monument in memory of the fourteen students. The story of this meeting was subsequently documented in the film *Marker of Change: The Story of the Women's Monument* (1998). After considering how this film highlights the same issue of male-female violence that figures in Wagner's play, I find it difficult to accept the argument that the play is only about the Yugoslavian conflict, especially when its deeper meaning is explored and unveiled. Furthermore, there is evidence to suggest that Wagner's play masks two converging forces operating within its structure, which sheds new light on the possibility that the Montréal massacre did in fact provide material for the play. Although Wagner herself has said that the play is about war, an exploration of its deeper meaning reveals that it is also about these two converging forces, or, in the author's own words, about the "ambiguities of morality and justice" and "the distance that must be traveled to find potential forgiveness." [1]

In *A Theatre of Envy,* René Girard argues for the possibility of having two different readings of a play, one characterized by the superficial play and the other by the deeper play. The "cathartic or sacrificial reading corresponds to what I have called the *superficial play,* whereas the revelation of mimetic rivalry and structural scapegoating correspond to the *deeper play*" (226). By "mimetic rivalry," Girard means the rivalry that occurs when we compete with one another to become better imitators of the same model; thus, we imitate our rivals even as we compete with them (Williams xi). As Girard further explains, the "specific difference . . . is that total make-believe replaces the partial

1 I quote here from Colleen Wagner's web page, formerly available at www.coolwomen.org. The page has since been taken down, but I retain hard copy. *The Monument* premiered in 1995.

make-believe of sacrificial rites" (222). My theoretical framework for this essay is the writings of René Girard, but I will not limit myself to works of Girard. While exploring the superficial and deeper elements of Wagner's play, I will also examine two different rituals, which represent the two converging forces operating within the structure of *The Monument*. Likewise, my examination of these two rituals implies that there are two different world views explored, or two competing myths (the two converging forces), at least one of which disguises and suppresses the mimetic-sacrificial infrastructure and, according to Girard, conceals "the endemic rivalry of mimetic desire — that rivalry that generates the conditions for the violence — but myths do not conceal the nature of the ensuing violent climax" (Mack 17). According to Girard, myths can conceal the conditions or causes for violence, but they do not conceal the nature of the ensuing violent climax. This holds true for the violent climax in *The Monument*. In addition, by understanding how Wagner resolves this violent climax, we can also understand the author's preferred choice of myth to put an end to reciprocal violence. In fact, throughout the play Wagner brilliantly juxtaposes these two unconscious powers or myths, and my examination of them (through the superficial and deeper readings of the play) reveals the strength and weaknesses of each with regard to ending reciprocal violence.

I believe that by pursuing both the superficial and deeper elements within Wagner's play, we can come to a clearer understanding of what historical crisis played an important role in providing the inspiration for the play. I will deliberately limit my argument to the question of how the theatre manages to deal with societal violence by representing it on stage, either metaphorically or through the elements of ritual and myth, as outlined by Girard. Therefore, I will not, for the most part, be dealing with the play as a play but instead with what the play

represents. When I do refer to the "play as a play," my purpose is only to distinguish between the deeper and superficial elements of the play.

The historical backdrop of *The Monument* is the war in the former Yugoslavia. The war took place in Bosnia and Herzegovina between March 1992 and November 1995 and involved several sides, including Bosnia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (later Serbia and Montenegro), as well as Croatia. Like many conflicts, this one involved religious factions. Croatia was the home of the Catholic enclave and Serbia of the Orthodox Christian element, while members of the Islamic faith mostly were centred in Bosnia. Within the context of this historical event, *The Monument* dramatizes the life of a young soldier, Stetko, who is caught up in political events he never really understood. He obeys his superiors only to find that, at the conclusion of the war, he has become the scapegoat for war crimes he committed. Stetko is eventually arrested for his crimes. At his trial, Mejra, who turns out to be the mother of Ana, one of Stetko's victims, rescues him from execution. Together, the two of them — Stetko still in his shackles, with a collar around his neck — journey back to the place where Stetko buried his victims, and it is there that Mejra forces him to dig up the bodies and build a monument in memory of these women.

The Monument evidently explores the Bosnian torture and murder of countless young women. In the *Canadian Theatre Review,* Basourakos states that "Stetko's opening monologue provides disturbing insights into the kind of callous objectification reinforced by totalitarian rule which condones the calculated ethnic cleansing of all undesirables" (90). Likewise, in his opening monologue, Stetko says, "It's a very good way to wipe out a race. Take away their women and get them pregnant. Their own husbands don't even want them after that" (17). As Dahlia Gilboa, a survivor of the Bosnian crisis, describes it,

during the war male aggression "manifested itself in a way unique to most other wartime rapes," in that "rape was used as a tool for ethnic cleansing through the forced impregnation of women" (2). Importantly, in the Bosnian context, rape was not necessarily followed by murder. As Beverly Allen notes in *Rape Warfare: The Hidden Genocide in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia,* "There is a difference between the kind of genocidal rape that ends in murder and the kind that ends in pregnancy: victims of the second kind of genocidal rape must be able to become, and remain, pregnant" (121). A passage from the play alludes to this particular and horrific behaviour:

STETKO I believe you like me.
But you're too old and ugly for a young guy like me.

MEJRA Too ugly to be raped, too old to be impregnated.
Just right for killing. (41)

Stetko would not have raped Mejra because she is either too ugly or too old to be impregnated; nevertheless, Wagner alludes to the second kind of genocidal rape, which did happen during the Bosnian crisis. Hence, according to the content of Stetko's confession, Gilboa's understanding of wartime rapes during the Bosnian crisis, and Allen's comments on the second kind of genocidal rape, Wagner was evidently stirred by this European tragedy.

Yet Wagner was not only dealing with the issue of ethnic cleansing in Bosnia. As we know from the story antecedent to the action of the play, Stetko murdered Ana, but Stetko informs us that Ana was "so pretty," her eyes "like a doe's" (69). In other words, Ana was not too ugly to be raped and not too old to be impregnated. In addition, she was not Stetko's victim of the second kind of genocidal rape that must remain impregnated. This scenario involving Ana is therefore not a solid illustration

of the Bosnian influence. Allen offers support for my contention that Wagner deviated for her own purposes: "There are many women . . . and many females . . . who do not qualify, so to speak, for this particular, and particularly Serb, atrocity because, for any number of reasons, they do not get pregnant" (121). Ana's situation exemplifies Allen's opinion, ironically, because of Stetko's own failure. As Stetko says in his opening monologue, "I didn't mind killing her 'cause she knew I faked it and I didn't want her telling anyone" (15). And later, in retrospect, he describes in detail why he faked it: "I can't get hard. It won't go in. I can't do it anymore" (70). Stetko thus killed Ana because of his fear of humiliation in front of his fellow soldiers. For this reason, Wagner is not primarily concerned with the historical or political details of the war, or with male violence against women, but is also concerned with the notion of why males fear humiliation and why their inability to deal with this fear can lead them to harm women.

If the play is centrally concerned with the historical crisis of Yugoslavia, or what Basourakos calls "the calculated ethnic cleansing of all undesirables"(90), then somehow the play might explore, for the most part, other aspects of that crisis, but *The Monument* does not. There is no mention in the text that Stetko is a Serb, and the only indication that might lead us to believe this is his ability to sing a "kind of Russian jig" (34). Moreover, a Serbian or Bosnian heritage does not necessarily come to mind when we consider some of his victims' names: Monica, Sarah, and Carol (82). Nor are there any allusions to the religions involved in the Yugoslavian conflict, Christianity or Islam. What the play does illustrate, beyond the aforementioned issues, is that Stetko's side of the battle "dug a big grave and put lots of them in it" (65). But mass burials occurred earlier, as in the ethnic cleansing of the Jewish people during the Holocaust. In addition, there are allusions in *The Monument* to other conflicts

throughout the world. For instance, Mejra says, "I would have cut my own throat to save Ana. I would have endured rape by every last soldier. They could have flayed me alive and dragged my wet body through the streets" (85). This allusion refers to the crisis in Rwanda, when American troops failed to capture a Somali warlord, and dead American soldiers were dragged through the streets of Mogadishu as punishment for US imperialism. Likewise, the Rwandan crisis involved Hutu troops who raped Tutsi women as part of the Hutu gencoidal campaign, and Wagner may have worked this circumstance into the play because it happened around the time the play was composed. Since there are references to other wars and violent circumstances outside of Yugoslavia, I conclude that the play is not just concerned with the Yugoslavian conflict; the evidence so far suggests that Wagner was concerned with other violent conflicts.

If the Yugoslavian conflict was not a primary concern for the playwright at the time she wrote the play, then there is a possibility that Wagner, perhaps unconsciously, did import material from the Montréal massacre, albeit on a lesser scale, to deepen her investigation of violence. There is a correlation between the tragic event at École polytechnique in Montréal (1989) and Wagner's play, if we consider the underlying conflicts described in the play and the political context surrounding the Montréal massacre. In *Interests of State: The Politics of Language, Multiculturalism, and Feminism in Canada,* Leslie Pal recognizes that a heightened tension existed between men and women in Canada of the late 1980s, and this "mood was powerfully affected in 1990 by the Lépine massacre at the École polytechnique in Montréal, which feminists almost universally interpreted as evidence of deeply rooted and widespread misogyny" (229). In reaction to the Lépine massacre, a group of Vancouver feminists, led by project co-ordinator Christine McDowell, formed a group whose goal was to create a permanent monument that would

name and remember the fourteen young women.[2] This project, which got underway around the same time that Wagner began her project, would take seven years to complete. The story of the Vancouver women's monument would be documented two years later by Hilary Jones-Farrow in her film *Marker of Change: The Story of the Women's Monument* (1998).

According to the mandate of the funding agency for the film, the purpose of the Jones-Farrow film was to change public attitudes and awareness regarding the increasing violence against women, and as expressed often in the film, this need was met by building a monument in memory of those young students murdered by Lépine. In the film, we observe how art and ceremony are appropriated to deal with the loss of these Montréal students. The beginning of the "Story" focuses on the need for a "Monument," as evidenced by the graphic depiction of the family members' anguish and the disgust felt by the feminist community. The viewers are informed that various artists from across Canada have been chosen to construct a piece of artwork, or monument, in memory of these young women. Each artefact will bear the name of one of the victims, and once each artwork, or fragment, has been finished, then that piece will be transported to Vancouver's Thornton Park where it will

2 In *Interests of State*, Leslie Pal documents that in 1975, under the Trudeau administration, government support for women's groups was re-evaluated. Pal discusses four governmental objectives, one of which was to "encourage existing programs, both within the Department of Secretary of State (Policy Branch) and in other Departments, to fulfill their responsibilities in providing [financial] resources for women's activities" (216). Eventually, funding was increased, from $406,000 in 1975 to $12 million in 1988 (221), with the money earmarked for "cultural projects aimed at changing public attitudes and awareness regarding women's issues and roles" (217). These cultural projects, which were funded through the Canada Council for the Arts, included the "performing arts, graphic and plastic arts, [and] media" (217). Indeed, both Jones-Farrow and Wagner, in her acknowledgements, thank the Canada Council for its "generous assistance."

be assembled in a circle along with the other thirteen pieces. Eventually, a ceremony is performed in the park that includes family members, as well as the artists, government dignitaries, and the general public. The documentary ends with an image of a circle of people, while the listener hears the sounds of voices naming each young woman over and over again until the screen fades to black. The need to remember the young women and the reason for their deaths is thus consolidated when a monument is built.

Wagner's play explores similar issues: the need to acknowledge victims of violent crimes, the building of a monument that will memorialize the victims, and the naming of victims within a circle. In a discussion with Stetko about the possibility of knowing the truth in war, Mejra makes the first reference to the play's title:

> We'll read about wars in the papers — new
> territories divided among the victors.
> New Leaders.
> Economic decisions determined by outside interests.
> There will be medals for the dead soldiers on all sides.
> Plaques for the brave and foolhardy.
> Monuments for Generals.
> What will anyone know about you and your
> girlfriend?
> About me?
> About the girls in the forest? (59)

From what Mejra tells us, the "Plaques" are for the brave and foolhardy, but the "Monuments" are for "Generals." These monuments and plaques are intended to memorialize those who sacrificed their lives; however, these arte-*facts* also recall the violence undertaken, either by some group or by some one, to harm that victim of war who has been forgotten. As Mejra

says, "What will anyone know about you and your girlfriend? About me? About the girls in the forest?" In the film, project co-ordinator Christine McDowell addresses this same need: "Everybody in Canada knew his name, and how horrible that at these women's expense he gets this notoriety, this fame. . . . Everybody knew his name, but what about them? . . . And that was part of the impetus for a permanent marker, showing their needs." Hence, like the Vancouver monument, the monument in Wagner's play is a symbolic dramatization of a need to displace the "notoriety" from the victimizer to those forgotten victims, and as McDowell mentioned, this need was part of the impetus for a permanent marker.

In the Jones-Farrow's documentary, we follow the story of one mother, Suzanne LePlante-Edward, who, like Mejra in the play, has lost a daughter and who attempts to deal with the injustice by taking part in a ceremony to build a monument. LePlante-Edward's reason for seeking justice is made evident when Mejra says in the play: "I did it for my daughter!" and "I was doing it for love" (84). Likewise, in the film, LePlante-Edward says, "When we got ourselves to the Polytechnique that infamous night, we eventually had to identify her, and so we did. I went around the table and I lifted Anne-Marie's neck and I kissed her on the forehead . . . and I felt a physical transfer of Anne-Marie's energy to me, as if to say, 'Mom, for cryin' out loud, do something with this energy!'" LePlante-Edward's participation in helping to build the Vancouver monument and allowing her story to be told marked the beginning of a journey that would allow those involved to share their overwhelming loss. In *The Monument,* Wagner also depicts a mother's quest to construct a monument for her murdered daughter, and the final scene of the play resembles the scene described above when the dead Anne-Marie is held in her mother's arms: "A monument of the dead bodies has been built. The corpses have been seated,

stacked in a circle, looking out. Mejra is standing by the monument *holding the corpse of Ana in her arms"* (80; emphasis added).

In "Colleen Wagner's *The Monument,"* Michael MacLennan notes that the building of the monument is a ritual to deal with the violence caused by war: "Later they return to the source of their inextricable bond: the forest in which Stetko has buried — and now must uncover and cradle — the women he killed. The final ritual, the construction of a monument to these women, provokes a crisis which enables these two people brutalized and made brutal by the sufferings of war to complete their harrowing journeys and share their overwhelming loss"(122). Thus, not only is Mejra's building of a monument a symbolic dramatization of the fundamental need to acknowledge the suffering of the victims of war, but it is a foundational ritual that will serve to memorialize them as well.

Like the ending of Wagner's play, the ending of the Jones-Farrow film depicts a ceremony within a circle. While the young girls' names are being called out, the camera focuses on various groups arriving: Aboriginal people, citizens from the Vancouver area, and groups representing women from all over Canada. What follows is an unveiling ceremony in which the white cloth covering each artwork is removed, so that each victim's name is revealed. Then the film continues with the naming of each student, followed with a speech by Member of Parliament Rosemary Brown: "This circle is dedicated to peace in the lives of women and it marks our determination to bring about such peace. This circle is a place of remembering." As Brown's speech moves to a close, the names are heard again, while the camera focuses on Suzanne LePlante-Edward, unveiling her daughter's name.

Like the Jones-Farrow film, Wagner's ending portrays a circle for the murdered girls in the forest, where from within this ritual circle the names of the women are called out to trigger our memory (81). Mejra and Stetko build a monument of the dead

bodies in which the "corpses [are] seated, stacked *in a circle*, looking out" (80; emphasis added). Then Mejra orders Stetko: "You are going to name them. We are going to build a monument to the truth about war. We are going to let the mothers reclaim their daughters" (78). Although it is Stetko who must name each of his victims, and it is he who constructs the monument, he does not act alone: Mejra tells him that "we" will build the monument. This is the point of departure between the play and the film, or, perhaps it would be better to say, between Wagner and the women who organized the Vancouver ceremony. In the Jones-Farrow film, or the Vancouver ceremony, the Lépine family is not invited to participate in the ceremony.[3]

The deeper elements of the play might offer some insight into the symbolic elements of the Vancouver ceremony and the historical event underlying it. According to Clyde Kluckhohn, any ceremony or ritual is "a symbolic dramatization of the fundamental 'needs' of the society, whether 'economic,' 'biological,' 'social,' or 'sexual'" (44). We observe in the play, as well as in the documentary, a symbolic dramatization at work, which is a representation of the historical event when year after year these people gather in a circle around each monument to memorialize that fateful event. This dramatization also represents the fundamental need to deal with the turmoil caused by violence, either in Mejra's case, or Suzanne LePlante-Edward's story from the documentary. For the circle in both cases serves as an

3 It was not until nineteen years later that Marc Lépine's mother was given the opportunity to appear publicly, on television, and it was then that she asked forgiveness from the families and friends affected by her son's actions. This is described in an interview with the Québec journalist Harold Gagné and is documented in his book about Lépine's mother, *Vivre: Dix-neuf ans après la tragédie de la Polytechnique, Monique Lépine, la mère de Marc Lépine, se révèle* (Québec: Libre Expression, 2008).

emblematic attempt to reorder visually (and socially) what has been torn from the victims, either by Stetko or by Marc Lépine.

Consequently, there is more to learn about the Vancouver ceremony when the deeper elements of *The Monument* are understood. The people who initiated this project, whether knowingly or unknowingly, have taken part in the formulation of a myth: "There is evidence that certain ideal patterns (for example, those defining the status of women) are slowly being altered to harmonize with, to act as rationalizations for, the behavioral actualities" (Kluckhohn 37). The ideal patterns and the behavioural actualities are what Kluckhohn also calls myths and rituals (37); therefore, there are myths that "define the status of women" and can be "altered to harmonize" with "the behavioural actualities" or rituals (i.e., the building of monuments). However, this newly formed myth defining the status of women may be difficult to recognize or accept because "ritualized conflict is the greatest secret of cultural conformity. Participation in our political conflicts generates the illusion of an outside that is really inside, and this illusion is the hardest one to dissipate precisely because it is ritualized" (Golson 147).

As noted already, the film *Marker of Change* documents a *story* of those who have gathered in Vancouver's Thornton Park to participate in a ceremony/ritual that memorializes the Montréal event. However, participation in ritualized political conflicts generates an illusion of an outside that is really inside, and this illusion pervades because the ritual keeps it "secret." Furthermore, that outside is represented by the violence attributed to Lépine, or in the case of the play, to Stetko. If Girard is correct in his understanding of how ritualized conflict generates an illusion of an inside violence, then the inside violence may very well be concealed by the story depicted in the documentary. Hence, there is a possibility that a feminist myth is at work because we observe a rationalization for it in the behavioural actualities of

the Vancouver women. Furthermore, the deeper element of the play, or Mejra's symbolic dramatization, provides insight into the need for a myth.

In fact, *The Monument*'s structure is designed in such a fashion that, as the plot unfolds, it deconstructs (and at the same time makes known) the process of mimetic rivalry (cyclical violence) and structural scapegoating. Likewise, once this deeper element of the play is unveiled, a feminist myth begins to show its face more clearly. A myth may conceal the conditions or causes for violence, but it cannot conceal the nature of the ensuing violent climax. This is why Girard claims that "it is only at this point that the vicious circle of reciprocal violence, wholly destructive in nature, is replaced by the vicious cycle of ritual violence" (*Violence* 145). This holds true for the ensuing violent climax in the play. Yet Wagner does not portray Stetko's murderous deeds on stage; they are constructed antecedent to the play's action. Within the drama proper, it is Mejra's violent nature that is presented. With this choice of dramatic structure, Wagner, in a crucial twist, portrays Stetko as a victim of female violence. Mejra's violent action is described in the stage notes as an eternal beating:

> *He leans into the collar and prepares himself for the beating.* MEJRA *stands in front of him and begins the beating, a beating which seems to last forever. The lighting changes to indicate a passing of time into night and a slivered moon. In this light we only see her back and her arms swinging back and forth as she strikes him. (27)*

We witness "her back and her arms swinging back and forth" under a "slivered moon"; we see no facial expressions of hers, and we cannot make eye contact with her. We are left only with a tableau of reciprocal violence, or her desire for vengeance, and the primitive sounds of grunting, or the sounds of her self-gratification. The violence has come full circle, or been

reciprocated, but the mimetic rivalry and structural scapegoating remain concealed, or hidden by a myth. However, Wagner's portrayal of the monstrous Mejra deconstructs the prevailing image of the stereotypical man who is overtaken by misogyny. In its place, Wagner reconstructs a more insightful view of the male-female potential to act out violence, and the author achieves this by further deconstructing Mejra's motives behind the violent climax.

However physically violent and painful a beating Mejra gives Stetko, she is unable to yoke him by her power. The reciprocal violence continues to escalate when Mejra resorts to a psychological violence, or an "inside" violence, and finally she is able to bring him to tears. She does this by exploiting the psychosexual impulses that Stetko has already experienced with his victims (the same fear that led him to kill Ana). Moreover, as we witness how Mejra's new strategy damages him emotionally: we also observe Wagner's deconstruction/dymthification taking its course. For example, Mejra tells Stetko that his girlfriend is dead, and Stetko recognizes soon enough her intention and says: "You're playing games with my mind. I know about mind games" (30). However, she soon conquers him emotionally as reflected in the following dialogue:

MEJRA I heard something about your girlfriend.
She was raped.

STETKO You lie!

. . .

MEJRA Yes she was.
Gang raped.
From the back.

He covers his ears and sings wildly fighting tears. [. . .] STETKO stops singing and sobs. (54, 56)

Sadly, Mejra's desire for revenge (i.e., the mimetic desire) grows, and Wagner shows us how far Mejra's ritual, or her need for violence, will take her. In the stage directions we are informed that

> *MEJRA, in a rage, rushes at STETKO with the shovel and strikes him on the back. He falls against the [female] bodies and scrambles behind the monument. MEJRA pursues him and strikes him a single blow to the head. . . . MEJRA realizes she has killed him and is horrified. (83)*

To her surprise, however, Stetko awakens from her blow and comments about her transformation: "So, you're glad I'm alive, eh? *You're just like me,* Mejra. A murderer. A slave and a dog" (84; emphasis added). Unlike Mejra at this point, Stetko learns when a human harms another, the process, or the means to do so, dehumanizes both victim and victimizer. Moreover, Stetko sees that she has undergone a transformation, due, in part, to the ritual she has taken part in. She has become a "slave" or "dog" to it, and this is why Stetko declares she is like him. Hence, according to Wagner, the "inside" psychological violence is as harmful as that outside physical violence, and when this inside violence is ritualized, it may escalate or reciprocate into violence that dehumanizes all who take part.

Mejra's behaviour is repulsive, and as MacLennan argues, it is so because she is unaware of the implications of the ritual in which she takes part: "Her unconscious, spontaneous rituals with Stetko, while an attempt to excise evil, are perverse and cruel demonstrations of the very tactics with which war criminals have terrorized her" (122). But why is she unaware of these implications of the ritual? She remains oblivious to them because the myth has conditioned her mind "secretly" to perceive otherwise, which not only disguises and suppresses this mimetic-sacrificial infrastructure but has also caused her to accept the idea that she is not a perpetrator but only a victim.

We observe how she is unconscious of how her mind has been transformed by the myth when Stetko confronts her about her cruel and perverse self. Mejra rationalizes her behaviour by good intentions when she says: "I did it for my daughter!" and when once again she states: "I was doing it for love" (84). But what is she referring to specifically when she says "it" in both statements? Is she referring to the building of the monument? Or is she alluding to an action, which is evidence for her part in the reciprocal violence? There is some indication that the "it" refers to her righteous quest for justice, but "it" really means revenge, because her rationalizations and behavioural actualities are not justified by her love for her daughter but rather by her *desire* for revenge. She says it: "Revenge is better than sorrow" (60). Hence, we must reconsider MacLennan's remark about Mejra's ritual. In her attempt to excise evil, through her ritual of building a monument, she has been deceived into terrorizing herself and Stetko.

The rationalizations Mejra has unconsciously accepted facilitate the masking of the myth. According to Girard, "Those who are caught in its vicious cycle, both killers and victims, *do not know* what they are doing. At the level of cultural institutions and rationalizations — ritual systems, for example — the mythic mentality prevails, *concealing the motivational* mechanism *by design*" (Mack 11; emphasis added). Mejra is not aware of how the myth influences her behaviour because it is designed to conceal itself by cultural institutions and rationalizations. But how does a myth conceal itself from her? As noted above, our male-female political conflicts generate the illusion of an outside reality that is really inside, and this illusion is the hardest one to dissipate precisely because it is ritualized. Mejra's ritual illustrates this process: it generates the illusion of an outside violence (the widespread misogyny) that is really inside (Mejra's rationalization: women are only victims). In addition, Girard

argues that "cultural artefacts [such as the monument] are structured [by artists] so as to *hide the mechanisms* of violence, and the mechanisms are designed so as to conceal even themselves" (Mack 11; emphasis added). Yet Mejra's rationalizations or designs for a monument (a symbol that justice was done) do more than remember or memorialize the victims of violence; they conceal the mimetic rivalry and structural scapegoating by the story of a deeply rooted and widespread misogyny. Simultaneously, this story, by design, initiates and conceals the recycled violence, or the reciprocal violence, as explained by Girard, and it is reasserted every time the ritual is repeated. In short, Wagner deconstructs the behavioural activities and rationalizations behind the ritual of building a monument, and as the author accomplishes this, the illusion of an outside violence (the superficial element of the play) "deepens" to reveal the presence of an inside psychological force of mimetic rivalry and structural scapegoating, which opens the way to providing an avenue to end the violence and blame.

As we have seen, Wagner's play portrays a ritual, Mejra's building of a monument, intended to deal with the sufferings of war. Yet we must also consider that the dramatic form in which Wagner has chosen to express her story is itself a ritual. In contrast to the Vancouver ceremony, however, Wagner's story attempts to redeem the sufferings between males and females in society. And unlike the monument-ritual in Vancouver, Wagner transforms her play's monument, which initially represents the pain and suffering of Mejra, into a monument of reconciliation between victim and victimizer. But one must ask at this point, what characterizes the myth behind Wagner's desire to transform the play's monument into a symbol of reconciliation? To understand this, we must look at Wagner's preferred avenue of how violence of any kind must end. In *Violence and the Sacred,* Girard argues that drama portrays a mimesis of

desire, or a violence that is endlessly repeated, unless either a scapegoat is chosen to dissipate that violence, or better yet, an avenue of redemption is offered to the victimizer (148). Girard's comment sheds light on the method Wagner chooses to resolve violence in the play, and Wagner's choice is unlike the one depicted in the film *Marker of Change: The Story of the Women's Monument*. Of the two avenues outlined by Girard, *The Monument*'s resolution attempts to end recycled violence when it suggests that an avenue of redemption must happen between Stetko and Mejra, and it does. As we have observed above, Mejra imitates the violence that Stetko himself has inflicted on Mejra's daughter, Ana. Stetko's violence is mimetic, too, if we consider that Stetko has imitated the violence of his fellow soldiers (14). However, the structure of the play delivers Stetko and Mejra from this mimesis of desire when it provides both victim and victimizer an opportunity to come together in an act that leads to reconciliation. The evidence for this begins when Mejra orders Stetko: "We are going to build a monument to the truth about war. We are going to let the mothers reclaim their daughters" (78). But what Mejra is unconscious of at this moment is that the monument she is about to construct for her daughter will also provide an avenue for her and Stetko to be reconciled. Unlike the monument ritual described in Jones-Farrrow's film, both victim (the mother) and victimizer (Stetko) are included in Wagner's final ritual to complete their harrowing journeys and share their overwhelming loss. Wagner's choice to include both parties in the play's ritual leads to the conclusion that reconciliation, between warring factions, is only possible when each party is offered an opportunity to be forgiven.

The Monument probes the issue of whether humans have the selfless grace needed to forgive one another. In the beginning of the play, Stetko feels no desire to ask for forgiveness because

as he says, "What difference would it make? It won't bring them back. It won't undo what I did. It won't make me a better man" (19). However, Mejra's first words in the play, "Won't it?" (19), allow us to understand Wagner's intention and how the play resolves the cycle of violence. From here on after, the play attempts to bring to light the possibilities of that question. The initial response to Mejra's question is that humans cannot *will* themselves to forgive, and the author means *both* Stetko and Mejra. Mejra tells Stetko "I'm your savior" (20), but she attempts to reform him by forcing him to face his victims:

MEJRA What do I have to do to you to make you remember?

STETKO Some things are just gone from memory.
Blocked out.

MEJRA (*hands him a shovel*) Start digging. (65)

After Stetko digs up Ana's body, we begin to understand that Mejra's intention to dig up remorse within Stetko's conscience is futile. Stetko describes the rape of Ana in factual detail, but there is no indication that he feels remorse. Yet Mejra pushes him further to identify with Ana by telling him to take the body of her daughter into his arms (77). But this attempt fails, too. Furthermore, when Mejra forces Stetko to name Ana as one of the women he has killed, Mejra's plan to trigger remorse within him actually produces a reciprocal pain within her: when she sees the monument that has been built to her pain, it adds to the violence. She has resorted to his methods, the use of force to resolve conflict, and this is why Stetko retaliates with "You're just like me" (84).

Fortunately, Mejra eventually accepts the truth of Stetko's observation, and when they mutually understand that violence (killing for him and revenge for her) has reduced both of them to "dogs" and "slaves," Wagner's earlier question of whether

forgiveness can make a difference surfaces again. But this time it is divorced from any motives of human justice:

MEJRA There's no justice in this world.

STETKO No.
Dogs and slaves.

MEJRA Dogs and slaves.
Long silence.
Get out of here.

She tosses him the keys to his chains. (86)

Although Mejra frees him, physically, they are not yet reconciled because they have not forgiven each other. She cannot forgive because she has not learned, yet, that her act of forgiveness needs to be divorced from her perception of justice. She wants revenge — not justice for the offences she has suffered. Thus, although she has offered the key to free him, he refuses to go.

Ironically, when Mejra tosses him the keys, she relinquishes all right to punish him further, thus opening the door to forgiveness, and it is at this point that Stetko makes a move toward reconciliation. Moreover, her action liberates him to do what she actually wanted him to do in the first place: "I'm sorry. I'm sorry for what I did. Forgive me" (87). This act also reminds us of his initial question about forgiveness: "What difference would it make?" The difference is that both are freed from the *desire* to be violent, not by any human force, but by an unconscious offering of grace. However, apart from recognizing that "there's no justice in this world," Mejra is confronted again with her human limitations — she does not know how to forgive, and her earlier comment, "I'm your savior," has to be re-examined because she now knows she does not have the "grace" to be his savior. This is why she responds with "How?" (87). It is here that Wagner understands human limitations. Sometimes we

don't know how to end the vicious cycle of violence. For Mejra, the question of *how* to forgive him becomes vital. He does say "Pardon?" (87), but Mejra reminds us of these limitations when she says, "I don't know how." Fortunately, Wagner does not condemn her characters to wait eternally to end the reciprocal violence:

> STETKO (*almost a whisper*) I'm sorry.
>
> *He unconsciously reaches out a finger to touch Mejra's hand.*
>
> Forgive me.
>
> *MEJRA unconsciously makes a movement in his direction.*
>
> *Slow fade on the monument of MEJRA and STETKO in a moment of possibilities.* (88)

With this act, the choice of a scapegoat is replaced by the act of forgiveness. The possibilities are offered to both Stetko and Mejra, and redemption is found. With this resolution, or unconscious act, we feel that the earlier violence between the two has dissipated, along with the unconscious mythic force that conditioned Mejra to seek revenge. Her earlier monument to violence has been transformed into a monument of reconciliation. This reconstructed monument symbolizes the power of a different myth, which removes the distinction between victim and victimizer and which includes both in the ritual of forgiveness.

Throughout the play, Wagner brilliantly juxtaposes the two unconscious powers or myths operating on Mejra's mind, and our examination of them through the superficial and deeper elements of the play reveals the strengths and weaknesses of each to put an end to cyclical violence. Initially, Mejra was the one conditioned and condemned to a vicious cycle of violence because there was no avenue to end it. The other unconscious

power frees her and Stetko of this violence, and it is an answer to Mejra's earlier question of "how?" Wagner's play reveals the avenue to forgiveness: the means to human redemption is characterized by an unconscious power operating within both Mejra and Stetko. This power, or selfless grace, is best explained by the other myth working unconsciously within Mejra and Stetko at the end of the play. Yet we have no definite description of it but only a suggestion of it shortly before Mejra hands over the keys to Stetko:

> The truth has a way of emerging.
> Nothing can stop it
> Once it's started.
> I may be gagged
> my husband tortured
> my house burned down
> my land stolen
> my children savaged
> but the wind will speak my name
> the waters will tell the fish
> the fish will tell the hunter
> "I am."
> I am. (78–79)

In *Totem and Taboo,* Freud argues that all ritual practices, all mythical implications, have their origins in an actual murder. He makes this assertion when discussing the meaning of suffering as a result of the hero's tragic guilt:

> He had to suffer because he was the primal father, the Hero of the great primeval tragedy which was being re-enacted with a tendentious twist; and the tragic guilt was the guilt which he had to take on himself in order to relieve the Chorus from theirs. The scene upon the stage was derived from the historical scene through a process of systematic distortion — one might

> even say, as the product of a refined hypocrisy. In the remote reality it had actually been the members of the Chorus who caused the Hero's suffering; now, however, they exhausted themselves with sympathy and regret and it was the Hero himself who was responsible for his own sufferings. The crime which was thrown on to his shoulders, presumptuousness and rebelliousness against a great authority, was precisely the crime for which the members of the Chorus . . . were responsible. Thus the tragic Hero became . . . the redeemer of the Chorus. (155–56)

Freud's comment about ritual practices sheds some light on how the "historical scene" at École polytechnique in Montréal (1989) is the actual origin for both the ritual gatherings in Vancouver and for Wagner's play. Wagner's play and Jones-Farrow's film were derived from a "historical scene," and through "a process of systematic distortion," or symbolic dramatization, a tragic guilt was placed on Stetko and Lépine. In this instance, Mejra is a representation for any one of the mothers, and Stetko is "a refined hypocrisy" of Lépine: both men are in their early twenties, have murdered about the same number of women, and consider themselves to be serious soldiers. However, what remains to be answered is whether Freud's comment about the Chorus (causing the Hero's suffering) can be applied to a real life situation. We can at least conclude that a myth has been born out of such a terrible historical event — a myth masked by the mimetic rivalry and structural scapegoating of Marc Lépine, a process that is also embedded in the deeper play of Wagner's *The Monument*. In contrast, however, when Stetko is forgiven, the second myth represented in Wagner's play, the one that engenders forgiveness, abolishes the need for the first, the one that engenders a pervasive misogyny and provokes reciprocal violence. After examining the deeper elements of Wagner's play, the difference between the Jones-Farrow documentary

and Wagner's play is most striking when we consider that *The Monument* is not a play that memorializes or reciprocates violence, or even attempts to dissipate it by the scapegoat process. In contrast, it offers an avenue to eradicate it for both victim and victimizer. *The Monument* demythifies the myth of a widespread misogyny and reconstructs a better way to put an end to recycled violence: by the act of forgiveness.

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Representations of the Self and the Other in Canadian Intercultural Theatre

ANNE NOTHOF

Individually and collectively, visible minority theatre artists in Canada dramatize their distinctiveness through the stories they tell. They explore the implications of their cultural origins and their interaction or collision with mainstream Canadian society. Their need to determine a sense of a particular self within an "other" society may be impelled by a desire to reify a particular immigrant varietal within a dominant culture, or it may be an attempt at acclimatization that resists assimilation. The emergence of a multifarious theatre practice across the country testifies to a polyphonic culture comprising a diversity of voices articulating their own traditions and responding to conformist pressures. Since the 1980s, these stories have increasingly reflected the multiracial experiences of a diaspora from South

and East Asia, the Caribbean, South and Central America, and the Middle East, enacting issues of acculturation and alienation and informing the construction of an intercultural society.

Although the naming of the "other" perpetuates a system of binary logic — us/them, inclusion/exclusion — as Dunja Mohr points out in her introduction to *Embracing the Other: Addressing Xenophobia in the New Literatures in English,* "it is nevertheless the Self that speaks the discourse of the Other" (xi), and this is particularly the case in theatre that facilitates a dialectical enactment of difference through intercultural performance. "Interculturalism" assumes an interaction with the "other" that accommodates difference. In *Performance at the Crossroads of Culture,* French theorist Patrice Pavis considers interculturalism more "appropriate to the task of grasping the dialectic of exchanges of civilities between cultures" than "multiculturalism" or "transculturalism" (2). He differentiates it from "intraculturalism," which "refers to the traditions of a single nation, and which are often almost forgotten or deformed," and from "transculturalism," which "transcends particular cultures and looks for a universal human condition" (20). In "Towards a Topography of Cross-Cultural Theatre Praxis," Jacqueline Lo and Helen Gilbert consider his approach biased toward a "Western vision of exchange" and advance a more complex topography, with "multicultural," "postcolonial," and "intercultural" as subsets:

> Whereas multicultural theatre is often the effect of state-determined cultural management and/or a grassroots response to the 'lived reality' of cultural pluralism, and postcolonial theatre is produced as part of (and in opposition to) a historical process of imperialism and neoimperialism, intercultural theatre is characterized as a "voluntarist intervention circumscribed by the agencies of the state and the market" (Bharucha 2000: 33). . . . Put simply, intercultural theatre is a hybrid derived from an intentional encounter between cultures and performing traditions. (36)

In the Canadian context, theatre critic Ric Knowles posits interculturalism as a positive, if tenuous, possibility — the "potential negotiation, exchange and forging of new and hybrid subjectivities," keeping "the focus on the spaces between cultures, broadly defined as "sites" (3). The process is "dialogic" rather than appropriative: the representation of a cultural "self" is articulated in response but not necessarily in opposition to the "other." Knowles distinguishes "interculturalism" from "multiculturalism," "with its links to government policy and its tendency to ghettoize" (3) and from "cross-culturalism," "with its suggestion of an interchange limited to two groups, usually the dominant culture and the 'other community'" (3). Josette Feral, however, questions whether interculturalism is a form of homogenizing globalization that "threatens the diversity of cultures and tends to level everything by reducing the different to the identical" (8): "Any practice that borrows, translates, or adapts elements of other cultures without contextualizing them inevitably contributes to the homogenization of current practices (and cultures) as well as to the loss of elements that distinguish them" (8). She concludes that "it is both appropriate and desirable to nuance and articulate differences among societies" (12). For Feral, interculturalism should not be a benign cultural blending but a political strategy: "In the struggle against absolutism, demagogy and the working of hegemony, perhaps the only truly intercultural practices are those that focus on conscious acts of resistance. These acts must stress crossings and disjunctions, allowing each culture to learn from the other without pillaging or enslavement" (12). The enactment of the "other" becomes a means of articulating difference and of asserting the veracity of the other as self.

Whether the stages of Canada enact the definition of an interculturalism that "produces an emerging, multiplicitous and hybrid range of ways of being Canadian" (Knowles 5), as

Knowles hopes, depends entirely, of course, on company mandates and the predilections of theatre practitioners. One of the first Canadian theatres to identify itself as an alternative to the dominant homogenizing Western culture in its representation of the "other" as "self" was Teesri Duniya, meaning "Third World" in Hindi. Based in Montréal, it was founded in 1981 by Rahul Varma and Rana Bose primarily as a South Asian group, producing works in Hindi, motivated by patterns of racism endemic to the Canadian system, and reacting to political and social structures outside of its heritage and culture. However, since 1985, the company has produced works in English and French, and it has evolved to become an inclusive organization whose membership, artists, and dramatis personae come from a wide range of ethnic and racial backgrounds. It is "dedicated to producing socially and politically relevant theatre that supports a multicultural vision of society, promoting interculturalism through works of theatre, and creating theatrical styles based on the cultural experiences of visible minorities living in Canada" (Teesri Duniya website). It is the sole intercultural theatre in Montréal, "the only large Quebec city where the multicultural composition is visibly and numerically pronounced" (Varma, "Minority Theatre" 6). Productions may use colour-blind or non-traditional casting, electing to place ethnic minority and female actors in roles even where race, ethnicity, or sex are germane, in order to disrupt convention and to question ways in which the other is represented. Indo Canadian artistic director and playwright Rahul Varma maintains that Teesri Duniya is "guided by the principle of 'who will listen to what,' not 'who should speak for whom'" ("Contributing" 25). He points out that "this theatre speaks of the contemporary cultural identity and heritage of . . . new immigrants in their new countries, reflecting their contribution to the society they are living in now" ("Minority Theatre" 6). Typically, Teesri Duniya performances

express a desire for social justice: they focus on the intersections of cultures and the personal, political and social consequences in Canada in terms of real human issues. They resist cultural homogenization and call for a shared social space.

Varma's early works focus on the struggle of immigrants in a society that marginalizes them: *Counter Offence* (1995), his first full-length play, offers a composite of different immigrant responses to Canadian society. It complicates the notion of the "other" by pitting one sociocultural practice against the other and asking whether they infringe on basic rights and freedoms. An Iranian immigrant, accused of beating his South Asian–Canadian wife who has sponsored his immigration, argues that wife-beating is tolerated in his country of origin. When a white policeman intervenes, he is accused of racism by an anti-racist activist. Complicating matters even further, a black social worker who advocates zero tolerance for violence against women comes to the policeman's defence, even though she realizes that there is a high incidence of police violence against ethnic minorities. The play opens with a speech, directed at the audience, by an Indo-Canadian anti-racist activist. He positions Canada as a multi-ethnic country in which social justice and equality should be possible — despite its racist history — but in his confrontation with the policeman, he provokes defensive responses with his assumptions of racism. In his final speech to the audience, he reveals a personal motivation for his politicized actions: his treatment as a foreign "other" in Montréal and a systemic denial of opportunities.

Varma's more recent work tackles broader "global" issues: *Bhopal* (2001) exposes the disastrous consequences of a gas leak from the Union Carbide site in northern India; *Truth and Treason* (2009), set on the Iraq border in a post-Saddam era, focuses on a Canadian woman married to an Iraqi considered to be a terrorist, whose daughter is shot by an American soldier.

The trajectory of Varma's playwriting history — moving from an examination of local immigrant communities to a critical investigation of more global issues — offers a paradigm for Canadian transcultural theatre, which reaches beyond the borders of a nation hitherto preoccupied with definitions of the self and other in national terms.

Teesri Duniya also hosts a wide range of culturally diverse productions, such as the musical comedy *Miss Orient(ed),* by Filipina-Canadian playwrights Nina Lee Aquino and Nadine Villasin, in the 2005 season. Three beauty pageant contestants for the title of Miss Pearl of the Orient identify with their Philippines culture in different ways: one was born in Canada, another emigrated as a child, and the third is a recent arrival. Each of the girls sees in her rival a representation of the other — either marginally Canadian or entrenched Filipina. The play counters stereotypes and questions the nature of identity formation.

The Adventures of Ali & Ali and the Axes of Evil, by Marcus Youssef, Guillermo Verdecchia, and Camyar Chai, played at Teesri Duniya in 2004, one of the play's many stops across the country. It is an exuberant political satire that sends up American terrorist paranoia and Canadian immigration policy, co-produced by two other culturally inclusive theatre companies — Neworld, in Vancouver, and Cahoots Theatre Projects, in Toronto. The two anti-heroes, recent immigrants to Canada from a Middle East country, attempt to overcome their stigmatized status as "other" but succeed only in exposing the practice and consequences of the War on Terror as a violent persecution of cultural difference.

On a more community-based level, Teesri Duniya has been engaged in an exploration of the life experiences of survivors of genocide, war, and other human rights abuses who are currently living in Montréal — the "Untold Histories" and social narrative constructions of men, women, and children with

origins in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Philippines, Palestine, Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Armenia, and the countries of South and Central America, as well as Aboriginal stories from the Montréal region and elsewhere. This practice of cultural inclusiveness provides an effective counter-offence to marginalization and othering.

Black Theatre Workshop, incorporated in 1972 in Montréal, initially focused on the ways in which black immigrants, primarily from the Caribbean, could contribute to the construction of an emergent Canadian culture, to diversify and democratize Canada by widening the range of performing arts and cultures. It began as the Trinidad and Tobago Drama Group, which produced the works of Derek Walcott among other international black writers, but split off from the main group to focus on the development of new works by black Canadian artists. One of the playwrights it nurtured was Lorena Gale, whose tragedy, *Angélique* (1998), exposes the racism and injustice long obscured by Canada's benign history narrative. *Angélique* is an articulation of memory in the form of political resistance. It re-enacts the story of a slave imported from Madeira and bought by a Montréal businessman for his wife but exploited as his mistress. Accused of starting a fire that destroyed a large part of the city, he was hanged in 1734. In the play, however, she takes the noose from the hangman and asserts her innocence, foreseeing the city "swarming with ebony" — her brothers and her sisters of the future.

Halifax playwright, George Elroy Boyd, a writer-in-residence at Black Theatre Workshop, has also examined the history of black migration to Canada, particularly in the Maritimes after the American Revolution, in *Wade in the Water*. Like *Angélique,* the play exposes a historical pattern of exclusion and repression but also suggests that black immigrants have long been a part of the fabric of Canadian society. *Wade in the Water* demonstrates

the importance of history in the affirmation of self and community against racism and marginalization. It traces the journey of a former slave from the post-war South to Nova Scotia, where he reunites with his son and then travels to Freetown, Sierra Leone, where, tragically, he is drowned by slavers when he foils their attempt to enslave his grandson. Although his own father and master was white, Nelson, the protagonist, finally rejects white paternalism as the foundation of the social order.

Playwrights and performers with ancestral roots in Africa, the Caribbean, the United States, and Britain who self-identify as "black" have reached a broad popular audience through several small theatre companies that have migrated from the alternative "other" to the centre stage of Canadian theatre production. Andrew Moodie, for example, exploded onto the Canadian theatre scene with his first play, *Riot* (1995), at Toronto's Factory Theatre, and subsequently produced at Black Theatre Workshop in its 1998–99 season. *Riot* demonstrates the conflicts within a group simplistically perceived as a homogenous "other" based on colour by a majority white society. Blackness is used to redefine Canadianness. The action takes place in a Toronto share-house during the time of the infamous riots in Los Angeles in 1992, which protested the acquittal of the white policemen who had been accused of viciously beating Rodney King. Six African-Canadian roommates argue over almost everything, including Québec's political aspirations, delinquent rent payments, and the riots. They lament the fragmentation of the Canadian "community" on cultural, ethnic, and regional grounds and denounce the carefully camouflaged racism in Canadian society, but they also reveal their own conflicts and prejudices. Their opinions are as disparate as their own historical and cultural origins.

Moodie's more recent play, *Toronto the Good* (2009), deconstructs perceptions of the self and other in the racial stereotypes

that perpetuate conflict in Canadian society. Moodie says of the play: "I want to start a dialogue, a real, substantive dialogue that can include citizens and policy makers. I don't believe that theatre can change the world, but I do believe that a play can create a conversation that resonates within a community, and that community can create change, if they choose to. If *we* choose to" (Moodie blog 2008). Like Varma's *Counter Offence, Toronto the Good* operates through stereotypical role reversals: a white lawyer defends a young black man charged with possessing a gun. A black Crown attorney defends a white female officer who is accused of pulling the black youth over in his car because he is black. The play ends with a plea bargain — a compromised and imperfect solution to a case entangled in issues of racial profiling.

Cahoots Theatre Projects also has performed an intercultural mandate since its founding in Toronto in 1986: it is dedicated to the creation, development, and production of new Canadian plays that reflect Canada's rich and complex cultural diversity, which encompasses race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, ability, language, and class. It has produced works by Korean, Chinese, Indian, Caribbean, and Canadian First Nations playwrights. Many of Cahoots' productions have travelled to theatres across Canada, playing to a broad audience spectrum. Anosh Irani's *Bombay Black,* commissioned and developed by Nightswimming Theatre and produced by Cahoots Theatre Projects, premiered in Toronto in 2006, travelled to Vancouver, and then returned to the Living Arts Centre in Mississauga in 2008. The play is set in an apartment in contemporary Bombay, where a young woman is forced by her embittered mother to dance before men for money, one of whom is the man to whom she was promised as a child. The narrative is grounded in Indian local traditions: *Bombay Black* contains no specific references to immigration or to Canada but assumes

a transcultural reception — the stories of India performed as Canadian culture. However, although Mississauga has a large Asian-Canadian population, the audience in the Living Arts Centre was almost exclusively white, and the production was memorable primarily for the "exotic" Indian dancing and costumes, distancing the play as a portrait of another cultural place and time.

The accomplished Indo-Canadian traditional dancer and actor Anita Majumdar, who played the young dancer, Aspara, in the *Bombay Black,* has also written two one-woman shows titled *Fisheyes* and *The Misfit,* in which she again plays a dancer. These are intercultural portraits, based on her own experience of dividedness growing up in Vancouver. A subsequent work, *Aisha n' Ben* (2009), portrays the relationship of an Indo-Canadian dancer and a Filipino actor during the shooting of a Bollywood film in Mumbai. Majumdar plays a young Indo-Canadian starlet obsessed with skin whitening, whose values are challenged by a dark-skinned Filipino-Canadian fellow actor, played by Filipino-Canadian actor and playwright Leon Aureus. *Aisha n' Ben* was remounted by South Asian Arts & Theatre Ji in collaboration with Toronto's Filipino company, the Carlos Bulosan Theatre, at the Vancouver 2010 Cultural Olympiad. Ostensibly, South Asian actors and stories became a means of articulating a Canadian identity to the world.

The shared places and migration of productions, performers, and directors of alternative theatres across Canada have produced a "third space" in which a distinctive sense of self and belonging can be expressed without being appropriated. For example, Marjory Chan's *China Doll* (2004) and *A Nanking Winter* (2008) were originally developed in collaboration with Nightwood Theatre, which has a long-established mandate to "forge creative alliances among women artists from diverse backgrounds in order to develop and produce innovative Canadian

theatre" (Nightwood website). In *China Doll,* Marjorie Chan played the role of the young protagonist, Su-Ling, who escapes from a restrictive traditional marriage in China in 1918, crossing cultures to re-enact Nora Helmer's final exit in Henrik Ibsen's *The Doll House*. *A Nanking Winter* was presented by Nightwood Theatre in association with Cahoots Theatre Projects at the Factory Theatre in March 2008. It recounts the horrific story of mass rape and murder in Nanking by occupying Japanese forces in 1937 from the perspective of a young Asian Canadian writer in the 1990s, who is determined that the truth be told. Chan's *Madness of the Square* (developed by Cahoots and performed at Factory Theatre in 2009) interrogates the reasons and consequences for the riots in Tiananmen Square — again demonstrating the transcultural range of Canadian theatre. Chan's primary objective, however, is to enable a multicultural environment in Toronto, regardless of the critical response to her work; she values the freedom and choices she has as an artist in Canada (Panel presentation).

For Jamaican-Canadian dub poet, d'bi.young, storytelling dissolves the boundaries between the self and other, without erasing the differences. She uses story to effect transformation — in herself and in the audience — and implicates herself in the work to close the distance between storyteller and audience. It is a magical process, a transference of energy, and a political act, a tool for social change. Her best-known work, *blood.claat,* a biomythological monologue, was first staged in the 2005–6 season at Passe Muraille in Toronto as part of the Stage 3 Festival with Obsidian Theatre, one of nine new plays from different cultural communities. It has since represented Canada at the International Aids Conference XVI and has been performed by the author in Montréal at the Black Theatre Workshop, to a predominantly black audience, and in Vancouver at the Magnetic North Festival in 2008, to a predominantly white

audience. In this powerful enactment of a young woman's coming of age, d'bi.young uses the metaphor of blood to explore issues of sexuality, violence, feminism, and class and locates her storytelling within an Afrikan-diasporic-herstorical context of critical analyses, promoting responsibility and accountability between storytelling and community.

In 2002, playwrights and actors Nina-Lee Aquino, Richard Lee, David Yee, and Leon Aureus launched Toronto's fu-GEN Asian-Canadian Theatre to develop and produce Asian-Canadian plays. Fu-GEN (signifying "future generations") uses the non-differentiating adjective "Asian" to refer to the many peoples of diverse racial, ethnic, and religious origins from South and East Asia: Filipino, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Indian. Most of the playwrights are also actors, performing in each other's works. In the casting, there is no attempt to be ethnically "authentic," but at the same time there is no colour-blind casting with respect to the use of white or black actors. Fu-GEN develops only new Asian-Canadian plays and attempts to match playwrights with dramaturges from Toronto's Asian communities, although there are exceptions: Argentinian-Canadian playwright Guillermo Verdecchia was dramaturge for the final play in the 2008 festival of new works, *Lady in the Red Dress*. The culturally undifferentiated term "Asian," signals both the inclusive and the exclusive nature of the theatre company, perhaps to "acknowledge the usefulness of tactical group namings in contemporary societies in which complicated entanglement of togetherness in difference is a normal state of affairs," as Tseen-Long Khoo points out in her study of Asian-Australian and Asian-Canadian literature (5). However, David La Breche suggests in his essay "Stereotypes, Prejudice, and Illusion in the Austral-Asian Otherworld" that such non-differentiation may also be a fundamental tool in maintaining a barrier between the self and other. In the case of fu-GEN's practices, the "other" is white, and the plays that

the company develops and produces tend to politicize the racial dynamics. Interculturalism is intentionally restricted to South and East Asian communities. One particularly graphic example is David Yee's *The Lady in the Red Dress* (2008), which travels back into Canadian history to re-enact the atrocities perpetuated by the Chinese Exclusion Act and the head tax and then forward to demonstrate the redress violently enacted by a Chinese femme fatale in a red dress. The subjects targeted for a lurid re-education in Canada's history are two demonical white racists, in the roles of government officials.

Fu-GEN's first full production was *Banana Boys* (Factory Studio Theatre, 2004) by Filipino-Canadian playwright Leon Aureus, adapted from the novel by Terry Woo. The play's epigraph is a telling quotation from the novel: *"There's a place for us out there, I know it. And if there isn't, we'll damn well make one"* (n.p.). *Banana Boys* tracks the conflicted lives of five young Chinese-Canadian men, as they struggle to establish a sense of self in terms of the traditional expectations of their families and of a materialistic Western culture. They succumb to the enticements of drugs, booze, and women but maintain their loyalties to each other. The play begins with Rick, an ambitious and unscrupulous business consultant who is lying in his coffin with a large triangular piece of mirror impaled in his chest. He has been destroyed in the process of creating an image of Western success for which he has sacrificed all cultural and personal values. Through his post-mortem mindshifts, his friends emerge as manifestations of his mental process, each also engaged in self-examination and in resisting the stereotypical images projected through the responses of others. Mike struggles with his parents' expectations that he become an icon of Western success by studying medicine, instead of pursuing his own desire to be a writer. Dave is consumed by self-destructive anger. His confrontation with a white stock boy in a grocery store is a way

of directing his anger away from himself as a social "failure" and onto the non-Asian "other":

> Look, I understand. I do. I'm not much of a threat to you, standing here, in front of all these people. I'm not physically intimidating to you, so you'll brush me off and file me away as just another immigrant that got in the way of fulfilling your duties as Head Stockboy. By lunchtime, I'll be nothing but an afterthought, and by the time you go home, I'll be completely erased from your underdeveloped, likely drug-addled brain. But you're forgetting one thing, buddy. I'm Chinese. And we have something called "tenacity." And what "tenacity" means is that weeks, months, maybe years from now, after a hard day's work of mocking Chinese people, I will find you. I will find you where you sleep. I will find you with the memory of this day clearly ingrained in my mind, and I will rip your fucking arms off and shove them down your throat, White boy. (7)

Luke is a self-defeating morning radio host who engages in serial quitting, and Sheldon's connection to the world is primarily through his cellphone. All are emotionally isolated in a society saturated by communications technology. All are stuffed full of the detritus of American popular culture and have little sense of their own history. All have sexual fantasies but believe that Asian women prefer white guys because they are at the top of the sociological ladder. Finally, in undertaking to write their stories, Mike begins to provide some insight into their conflicts.

In Vancouver, where about 40 percent of the population has Asian roots, only the Vancouver Asian Canadian Theatre, founded in 2001 by Joyce Lam, has a specific mandate to perform Asian-Canadian works, primarily sketch comedy and musicals, which provide local actors with an opportunity to polish their skills. However, several small experimental companies such as urban ink and Neworld have an inclusive mandate to create and produce Aboriginal and interracial works. According

to Filipino-Canadian author Chris Gatchalian, "cultural diversity is an embedded part of what indie Vancouver companies do" (Panel presentation). Rumble Productions and Neworld Theatre have been engaged in creating diverse performance pieces for over ten years, some of which have premiered at the eclectic annual PuSH International Performing Arts Festival. Neworld productions are highly politically engaged, focusing on multicultural issues and reflecting Vancouver's and Canada's diversity through a wide range of genres and techniques. First productions, including *Love, Quest,* and *Evening in a Strange Land,* were primarily folk-style adaptations of classical Iranian texts and/or myths, reflecting the cultural background of founder, Camyar Chai, as well as the sizeable population of Persian Canadians in the Lower Mainland of Vancouver. With *Devil Box Cabaret* (1999), based on the play *The Four Boxes* by Iranian writer, director, and filmmaker Bahram Beyzaee, Neworld experimented with a more hybridized performance style and site specific location. Other productions and co-productions include *Asylum of the Universe* (2003), by Camyar Chai, and *Tideline,* by Wajdi Mouawad. Its 2010 season included the political satire *Ali & Ali: The Deportation Hearings,* by Camyar Chai, Guillermo Verdecchia, and Marcus Youssef, in which the Agrabanian refugees from *The Adventures of Ali & Ali and the Axes of Evil* return in even worse shape to confront an economic meltdown and the swine flu.

Djanet Sears has also engaged in migratory intersections in her work with Toronto theatre companies to ensure that the voices of black women reach a wide audience: she has collaborated with Nightwood and Obsidian, a black theatre company, in the development of three of her plays. For Sears, being black isn't one thing, and there is a chorus of stories to tell. Her first work, *Afrika Solo* (1987), is an "automythography" — the story of a young black Canadian woman, "British by birth, Jamaican on her mother's side, Guyanese on her father's" (11), who travels to

Africa to trace her roots and to discover or create a sense of self. She has not found in Western popular culture's representations of her race any image with which she can identify. But in her "ancestral homeland," her "cultural birthplace" (78), she feels homesick for Canada and finally concludes that she is "African Canadian. Not coloured, or negro . . . Maybe not even black. African Canadian" (88). She in effect asserts an intercultural identity.

Sears's play *Harlem Duet* (1997) "writes back" to Shakespeare's *Othello* to demonstrate the ways in which the politics of a Western and white theatrical tradition may be deconstructed through role and race reversal in order to establish an integral sense of selfhood and culture. Set in New York, and evoking the American blues tradition through musical and linguistic references, it enacts the psychological and social consequences of betrayal when the black protagonist's husband leaves her for a white woman. It also establishes corresponding betrayals during the time of slavery before the Civil War and in the dressing room of a Harlem theatre in 1928. *Harlem Duet* is not ostensibly a Canadian intercultural work, although it offers, in the character of the protagonist's father, pointedly named "Canada," some hope of healing through a reconnection with cultural roots: the Nova Scotian community of freed blacks established just after the American War of Independence with the exodus of Loyalists and their slaves. According to critic, Marlene Moser, *Harlem Duet* accomplishes a hybridization of cultures: "The play assumes an intimate knowledge of Shakespeare's *Othello* and offers a complex, hybridized fabric of explicitly black references from history, music, and popular culture" (247).

Sears's *The Adventures of a Black Girl in Search of God* (2002) also resists cultural extinction through a resurrection of a rich local history. It is set in the southern Ontario black community of Negro Creek, which is close to losing its historical identity

through the imposition of a more politically correct name. The female protagonist, Rainey, is grieving the death of her daughter, and her marriage begins to come apart as a consequence. She is sustained only by the spirits of her community, who provide a context and a meaning for her life. These are manifested as a chorus of ancestors, whose hymns and African chants create a vibrant sound pattern that connects the black diasporic movements in Canada to those of their African ancestors. As Sears explains in her introduction to the published text of the play, the chorus suggests that the characters are not alone but are supported by a host of souls, "below, beside and beyond" them (iii). She derives this idea from a West African proverb that asserts (in her words), "We stand on the shoulders of our ancestors" (iii). As a woman of colour, she never loses sight of the fact that her own personal history links her to the stories of her ancestors from Africa or North America, and so her play is "deeply rooted in African oral tradition, a significant cultural characteristic of the African diaspora here in the Americas. A tradition that has withstood nearly four centuries of institutionalized attempts at eradication" (iv) and that is now embedded in Canadian soil. In *The Adventures of a Black Girl in Search of God,* Rainey eats dirt:

> Now I just hunger for the soft sugary earth by Negro creek. My Pa's family lived and died on this bush land — been ours since the war of 1812. Maybe that's why it tastes so sweet. My great grandmother gave her life to this water trying to save a soldier's uniform. Lorraine Johnston. I was named for her. (19)

Nightwood and Obsidian also collaborated in the development and production of *Cast Iron,* a one-woman play by Lisa Codrington based on the life of her Barbados-born grandmother, which opened at the Tarragon Theatre in 2005. Performed in Bajan dialect, it alienated some of the more prominent

Toronto critics, who claimed they could not understand the language. In her essay on the reception of the play, "Patrolling Our Borders," Michelle MacArthur points to the ways in which an "outsider" may position herself as "insider": "Acknowledging that the majority of the Tarragon's audience would not be made up of poor immigrant women of colour like Atwell, Codrington challenges them to occupy an outsider position to which she, as a black woman and a first generation Canadian, is accustomed as a theatre-goer" (26). She maintains that despite linguistic differences, the play spoke to diverse audience members who have experienced a self-suppression of their own language and culture within a white, English majority. MacArthur concludes that "the play attests to the fact that — by understanding its audience as heterogeneous and dismantling essentialist binaries like Self-Other — *Cast Iron* was able to create alliances between marginalized communities and across differences of gender, race, class, and citizenship" (26).

As a postcolonial political strategy, one that dismantles power structures and binaries, Canadian intercultural theatre practices a conscious act of resistance to cultural hegemony. It performs and critiques an intersecting of cultures and both asserts and interrogates perceptions of self and other. It acts against hybridization when it works to differentiate and distinguish, accurately and specifically identifying the history that underlies contemporary circumstances and assumptions. It performs interculturalism as an agonistic relationship, enacting the incommensurable elements "as the basis of cultural identification . . . remaking the boundaries, exposing the limits of any claim to a singular or autonomous sign of difference — be it class, gender or race" (Bhabha 219). With each performance, Canadian intercultural theatre creates a space which a disparate population can inhabit, at least for the duration of the play, as a community.

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Pulling Her Self Together: Daphne Marlatt's *Ana Historic*

VERONICA THOMPSON

Smaro Kamboureli has argued that Daphne Marlatt writes "in and through a language that is grounded in the feminine body" (32). I would propose further that the feminine body in which Marlatt's language is grounded is the body of the mother. In her novel *Ana Historic,* Daphne Marlatt reconstructs history and presents female protagonists probing female histories as a means of recovering/discovering their own identities as postcolonial settler subjects within "alien" countries. Marlatt's rummages through history are focused almost exclusively on the protagonist's mother and the relationship between the protagonist (Annie) and her mother. Marlatt's, and Annie's, engagement with a revisionist history takes up the complex position of the female settler subject and explores the tension of language,

place, and identity, all within the discourse of the maternal. The centrality of maternal imagery in twentieth-century settler women's writing is reflective of the "maternal" experience of colonization that permeates nineteenth-century records of settler women's lives and is indicative of the continuing significance of the rhetorically figured "mother country" and the complex psychodynamics of the Empire-colony relationship on the settler writer's imagination.[1] What ultimately transpires in *Ana Historic* is that the female characters metaphorically give birth to each other and to themselves against the backdrop of colonial history and the power relationship implied in the colonial dialectic of the mother-country/child-colony. In exploring these issues, Marlatt turns to the hybrid form of fiction and autobiography. This elision of fact and fiction allows Marlatt to theorize relationships between mothers and daughters, relationships that are often experienced as closely related to the protagonists' mothers' relationships with England, a persisting political reference point in postcolonial settler literature.

Ana Historic is the story of Annie, an unfulfilled woman who struggles through her personal relationships with her now deceased mother, Ina; her controlling and unsympathetic husband, Richard; and her lesbian confidante, Zoe, to achieve a self-identity within the context of the Canadian landscape. In her attempts to construct a "self," Annie engages with her mother's fragmented and conflicted self, and with the historical Mrs. Richards. Through her analysis of her mother's life and her imaginative reconstructions of Mrs. Richards's life in a Victorian Canada, Annie comes to recognize the possibilities for her own life.

1 On motherhood and imperialism, see Anna Davin. I explore maternal discourses and the literal and figurative representations of mothers and daughters in settler women's writing at greater length in "Representations of the Return to 'Mother' in Canadian and Australian Settler-Invader Women's Writing."

Annie severely suffers from the loss of her mother, who constructed a story of education, marriage, and pregnancy for Annie to enact, a story that excluded "any past outside of England's" (22) and precluded the "anonymous territory" (18) of Canada. During Annie's childhood, her mother's privileging of English culture forced Annie into "two languages two allegiances" (23). The world Ina transposed onto the 1950s' Salish mountainside and her unquestioned "English gentility in a rain forest" (24) constructs an incomplete story for Annie; in her own words, "and now you're dead Ina, the story has abandoned me. i can't seem to stay on track . . . i don't even want to 'pull yourself together'" (17). But Annie does more than pull herself together; she also pulls together "the cultural labyrinth of our inheritance, mother to daughter to mother" (24).

Annie begins to reconstruct her labyrinthine maternal heritage on a personal level by becoming the "interpreter of her mother's place in that world" (31). Ina's actions, which the teenage Annie perceived as destructive, are re-evaluated by the adult Annie, who now recognizes in her mother's compulsive painting and obsessive floor washing the dissatisfaction that she herself is currently experiencing within the patriarchal institutions of marriage and motherhood. Annie begins to recognize that the social conventions her mother vehemently espoused are the same social conventions that "claimed so much from women trying to maintain" them (32) and that prevented Ina from seeing "the you that was you, invisible in the mirror, look out at last" (58). The damaging effects of patriarchal institutions notwithstanding, Annie's revaluation of Ina's "story" is also important because it recognizes and acknowledges that Ina is "looking for . . . some elusive sense of who [she] might be" (46). In addition to being effaced within patriarchy, Ina is also not at home in a territory she can't account for in her own words. Ina's displacement in Canada results from "holes. there were holes in the story

you had inherited. holes in the image. Canada: romance of the wilds, to which you brought: a trunkful of woolly underwear" (26). While Annie struggles to forget her woolly underwear and the embarrassing language of her mother — woollies and sweeties, hotties and hermits, lavatories and loos — Ina clings to this world of words she brought to, and attempts to transpose onto, Canada so as not to "die insane in a foreign country" (98).[2]

Insanity in a foreign country is a crucial trope in Marlatt's novel, from both feminist and postcolonial theoretical standpoints. Before returning to the feminist politics of Marlatt's novel and her exploration of female displacement — "all the ways we don't fit into a man's world" (79) — it is worthwhile addressing this sense of displacement from a postcolonial perspective, particularly from the linguistic position of the settler subject. Ina's adherence to English culture and proper spoken English is indicative of what Stan Dragland calls "the burden of imperialism" (59). For Ina, the language she transposes to her Canadian living space bears the weight of "the tidy meaning which the simplest word had brought with it from England" (Lee 514) and further alienates her from that space: "Something is wanting in me. and it all goes blank on a word. . . . all these empty words. . . . a word for the wild. for the gap i keep coming to" (*Ana* 48).

The problem Ina encounters, "stepping off the train into mythic snow one dark November afternoon" (27), is the problematic relationship between land and language in colonial space, which Homi Bhabha explains: "The institution of the Word in the wilds is . . . a process of displacement, distortion, dislocation, repetition" (91). Bhabha's sentiments have been echoed by

2 This is an issue that recurs in Marlatt's later novel *Taken*, in which Marlatt explores another mother-daughter relationship in another colonial space: Australia.

numerous postcolonial theorists who recognize displacement, distortion, and dislocation when a "foreign" language is applied to a colonial space.[3] The resulting incongruity is not a simple mismatch that can be silenced through time in and familiarity with the colonial place. This is apparent in Ina's inability to apprehend meanings beyond the "old standard" (17). Faced with "new colonial" meanings for "old imperial" words, she turns to her "immigrant weapon" (17): the dictionary.

The institution of the Word, represented in *Ana Historic* by Ina's dictionary, fails her because the words it contains do not "hear" the sounds of the colonial place: "what lay below names — barely touched by them" (13). What Marlatt fictionalizes in *Ana Historic* bears a close resemblance to Dennis Lee's seminal articulations on language in the colonial "space" of Canada. Lee argues in "Cadence, Country, Silence: Writing in Colonial Space" that the "cadence" of the colonial space of Canada is obstructed by imperial language. Lee defines cadence "as a presence . . . both outside myself and inside my body opening out and trying to get into words" (498), and, for Lee, cadence is local, "insistently here and now" (502).[4] Cadence becomes problematic for Lee when the locale from which cadence emanates is in question, which is the case for the Canadian settler. Because language is partially derived from what Lee calls "civil space," institutionalized forms of language (such as Ina's dictionary) are alien to the "uncivilized" space of the colony, making it at best difficult and at worst impossible to speak, or

3 See, for examples, Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back*; Lee; Kroetsch; Maxwell.

4 Cadence is not specifically a colonial/postcolonial phenomena for Lee; however, his argument is based on a cadence that is specifically Canadian: "It is not in Canada — vice-versa — nor is it real only for colonials. But it has its own way of being — here for us" (517).

speak authentically in, space. Since "the colonial writer does not have words of his [*sic*] own . . . he projects his own condition of voicelessness into whatever he creates . . . he articulates his own powerlessness, in the face of alien words" (Lee 512).

While Lee's argument ostensibly speaks of something tangible and audible, it is apparent by the end of his essay that his experience of cadence is much more an intangible and visceral one. After delineating his personal experience and subsequent concerns with language and voice in colonial space, Lee proposes a solution:

> The impasse of writing that is problematic to itself is transcended only when the impasse becomes its own subject. . . . Putting it differently: to be authentic, the voice of being alive here and now must include the inauthenticity of our lives here and now. (516)

Ina's and Annie's characters represent both senses of Lee's argument. Ina experiences "the crumbling of words" (13) in Canadian colonial space, which results in her madness and subsequent electric shock therapy. While Ina's steadfast adherence to her language fails, and ultimately silences her, Annie begins to "reappropriate" "a whole swarm of inarticulate meanings [that] lunged, clawed, drifted, eddied, sprawled in half-grasped disarray beneath the tidy meaning which the simplest word had brought with it from England" (Lee 514). Annie is acutely sensitive to language, and as Lee argues, questions the authenticity of her life as the language that surrounds her has constructed it. It is only once Annie recognizes the "impasse: 'my very words' were yours" (23) that she begins to hear the underlying Canadian meanings as she reconsiders the words given her by Ina. While recalling her mother, Annie asks, "what do you do when the true you you feel inside sounds different from the standard?" (18), and wishes she could share with her mother

> what i escaped to: anonymous territory where names faded to a tiny hubbub, lost in all that other noise — the soughing, sighing of bodies, the cracks and chirps, odd rustles, something like breath escaping. something inhuman i slipped through. in communion with trees, following the migratory routes of bugs, the pathways of water, the warning sounds of birds, i was native. (18)

This type of thinking seems to speak directly to Lee's argument that

> to name your colonial condition is not necessarily to assign explicit terms to it. . . . The weight of the silence can also be conveyed by the sheer pressure behind the words that finally break it. Then to name one's own condition is to recreate the halt and stammer, the wry-self-deprecation, the rush of celebratory elan and the vastness of the still unspoken surround, on which a colonial writer comes to know *his* house, *his* father, *his* city, *his* terrain — encounters them in their own unuttered terms and finds words being born to say them. (517; emphasis in the original)

While Lee's argument here does not include women in his catalogue of "re-appropriation" of words, it is a fitting paradigm with which to explore the problematic nature of language for the female writer/character in colonial space that is implied by Marlatt in *Ana Historic*.

Marlatt does not explicitly name Annie's or her other characters' colonial condition. One reason for this is that the very "process of naming opens wider the very epistemological gap which it is designed to fill" (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, *Postcolonial* 392), and, as Kroetsch argues in "Unhiding the Hidden," the task of the Canadian writer becomes not to name experience but to "un-name" it (43). Marlatt's narrator is quite consciously engaged in the process of "un-naming." Annie ponders the meaning of common words — "tomboy," "homefree," "fact,"

"implacable" (13, 31, and 58) — often turning to etymology in order to hear/understand the words differently. She begins to hear the "double masculine" (13) in tomboy, the paradox of "homefree" (13), "the f stop of act" (31). While Annie engages in the process of "unnaming" her colonial experience — in her forgetting her mother's words, her breaking down of words and her etymologizing — she becomes fascinated with

> the silence of women
> the silence of trees
> if they could speak
> an unconditioned language
> what would they say? (75)

And this is the site where postcolonial and feminist theories of language meet in Marlatt's novel.

Lee's argument has striking parallels with much feminist language theory, and even at times uses remarkably similar language. Lee advocates *joual,* feminism *jouissance*. The "halt and stammer" Lee recognizes resonates with the "halting and . . . punning" of Alicia Ostriker (331). Also, just as Lee contends that language means differently in colonial space, Mary Daly argues, "Women have had the power of naming stolen from us. . . . Words which, materially speaking, are identical with the old become new in a semantic context that arises from qualitatively new experience" (8).

Women's relationship to language and signification is a question feminism repeatedly addresses in both imaginative and theoretical writings, most notably perhaps, in the latter case, in the works of Hélène Cixous, Luce Irigaray, and Julia Kristeva. While these critics do not, of course, proffer identical theories on women's language — there is considerable debate between them as to whether women have only partial access to language or access to a partial language, and whether a specifically

female language does, can, or should exist, and whether women should challenge the discourses that stand — there is a common agreement that women are forced to conform to an alien order and "language according to the power that dominates" them (Whitford 75).

Cixous, Kristeva, and Irigaray all offer what are now familiar models for *l'écriture feminine* or *langage de femme*. Cixous, for example, has argued that feminine writing originates in the mother, particularly the mother-child relationship that precedes the acquisition of verbal language. This "voice mixed with milk" (Cixous 173) manifests itself in writing that undermines and subverts fixed signification and opens out into a jouissance or "joyous freeplay of meanings" (Abrams 93). Kristeva, too, posits a preoedipal, prelinguistic signifying process centred on the mother, the semiotic, which disrupts phallocentric language when it erupts as avant-garde writing. Irigaray asserts a feminine writing that finds its potential "inherent in the structure and erotic functioning of the female sexual organs and in the distinctive nature of female sexual experience" (Abrams 93).

Consideration of these theories in conjunction with Lee's theories of Canadian cadence goes some way toward explaining Annie's inability and refusal to name her colonial condition. Because Annie experiences the colonial space of Canada as sighings, cracks and chirps, odd rustles and escaping breath (18), she must look beyond the colonial English language for another way to express her experience, and ultimately her self. As well, as a woman, Annie is simultaneously disadvantaged by and denied entry into male-centered language — and her experience of Canadian/postcolonial language against British/imperial language overlaps with her experience of a female/non-patriarchal language against a masculine/patriarchal language system.

Language "mixed with milk," or a "mother tongue," is not

sufficient in itself, however, for Annie, or for the female settler subject, to undermine and overcome phallocentric language. A "mother tongue" is problematic in *Ana Historic,* and in the settler colony in general, because of the powerful presence of the colonial mother, or "mother country." The language of the mother country, as Lee has shown, prohibits the opening out into *jouissance* precisely because it is the language of the mother country. The result is "milky" language.

The complexity of the language nexus becomes apparent in Annie's relationship with her mother, Ina. The conflict between them is accentuated by the mother-daughter nature of their relationship. Cixous, Kristeva, and Irigaray all locate the maternal as a source of female empowerment in language but are aware that the mother-daughter relationship is a conflicted one because the autonomy/nurturance conflict is perpetuated in the institutions of patriarchal culture. Annie feels immense hostility toward her mother, whom she perceives as the upholder of patriarchal ideals and the inculcator of restrictive codes of femininity. This leads to a breakdown of communication between mother and daughter, and the subsequent silence (an eruption of Kristeva's semiotic in its own right) between Annie and Ina seems prohibitive in Annie's access to a female language and female identity, for "female identity formation is dependent on the mother-daughter bond" (Gardiner 179). So Annie seeks access to language and female identity in another relationship, one that brings her into direct contact with the mother country. In this instance, however, the daughter does not return to England but brings a "mother" from the imperial centre to a new land in the form of Mrs. Richards, indicating again the simultaneous and ambiguous desire for and rejection of mothers and the mother country experienced by their daughters and their colonies, respectively.

The death of Annie's mother is the catalyst that brings *Ana*

Historic to be. Koppelman argues that the ambivalent relationship between mother and daughter is often reflected upon by the daughter at crucial "life" moments, particularly the mother's death. This reflection most often results in a reinvention or recuperation of the mother's identity, or, at very least, an understanding of the mother as subject, which was previously precluded by the conflicting desires for close association with and autonomy from the mother experienced during childhood and adolescence. The death of Annie's mother results in her reflective writing, as Annie attempts to reconstruct the story of Ina. But, she fails: "I-na, I-no-longer, i can't turn you into a story. there is this absence here" (*Ana* 11). This absence makes it impossible for Annie to define the identity of her mother or her self through identification with her mother. Instead, Annie must — and does — seek her identity in a surrogate mother: Mrs. Richards.

> i imagine her standing slim in whalebone at the ship's rail as it turns with the wind, giving her her first view of what would become home as she imagined it, imagining herself free of history. (black poplin. useless baggage). there is a story here. (14)

Stan Dragland has already argued that Mrs. Richards functions as "Annie's probe for identity, as her surrogate adventure in a gothic patriarchal world" (49), and that the impetus for Annie's writing is a "reaction against history in which women are a-historic" and "the need to find a way out of the closed system she inherited from her mother" (54). However, bringing a surrogate and "historic" mother from the mother country cannot easily resolve the conflicts Annie is experiencing regarding her identity, because Mrs. Richards's language and story originate in the mother country, from which Annie is also struggling for autonomy.

Annie first discovers Mrs. Richards while assisting her husband, Richard, a historian, with his research. Annie is struck by the scant information regarding Mrs. Richards in the local histories, despite the existence of her journal, a discovery that reinforces Annie's learning "that history is the real story the city fathers tell of the only important events in the world" (28), causing her to ask "where are the city mothers?" (28). Annie becomes obsessed with this one city mother — about whom she knows few "official" details: she was English, she was a widow, she was a school teacher, she married Ben Springer, she bought a piano. On the scaffolding of these facts and Mrs. Richards's journal, Annie works to build Mrs. Richards's private world, the result being as suspect as Mrs. Richards's journal in the archives — "inauthentic, fictional possibly, contrived late by a daughter who imagined (how ahistoric) her way into the unspoken world of her mother's girlhood. . . . and her daughter? we know nothing of her, this possible interpreter of her mother's place in that world" (31).

Here is the nexus between Ina, Annie, and Mrs. Richards, the slippage between these women's relationships. Annie, already engaged in the contrivance of her mother's unspoken world, suggests the possibility of a similar situation between Mrs. Richards and her own daughter. However, with no historical evidence of a daughter, Annie slips into that role. She becomes the interpreter of Mrs. Richards's place in nineteenth-century Canada. As Annie "imagines" a private life for Mrs. Richards, she opens up the possibilities of Mrs. Richards's life, and subsequently the possibilities for her own life; but, equally important, she becomes "quite close to her in the course of imagining scenes out of her life, imagining this diary that she's writing, and these attempts to . . . unwrap . . . the story of her own sexual conditioning" (Marlatt, qtd. in Bowering 98).

The colonial Canadian setting, crucial to understanding the

conflicted nature of the relationship between Ina and Annie and their respective identities, becomes central to Mrs. Richards's place in history, too. Living in the male territory of a frontier logging camp, Mrs. Richards's situation is already allotted her — as school teacher and, later, wife, neither of which afford her independence. Annie and Mrs. Richards share feelings of dependence and fear, despite their different places in time, that result from being "Canadians" as well as women. Marlatt, who introduces the possibility that Mrs. Richards adopted the "Mrs." as "an answer in a way to the question of how you can be an independent woman in a male world like that" (Bowering 99), still acknowledges the predatory nature of courtship for both the nineteenth-century Mrs. Richards and the twentieth-century Annie. The novel opens with Annie's fears. "Who's There?" (9) are the novel's first words, fears engendered by being a woman in foreign, male territory: "a woman, walked with the possibility of being seen, ambushed in the sudden arms of bears or men. 'never go into the woods with a man,' you said, 'and don't go into the woods alone.'" (18). The potential dangers figured in Ina's warning to Annie are also felt by Mrs. Richards nearly a century earlier as she walks unaccompanied to, and then through, Gastown. As she pulls her shawl tightly around her, she asks, "What was she afraid of?" (96), but for a woman walking alone the dangers were many: bears, cougars, "drunken seamen, Indians running amok" (96), the looks men gave her (54), a stranger — "who [lit] up when he saw her, as if she were a grouse flushed out of the bush, raising his hat with an extravagant gesture — mocking her, in fact, for being here at all" (102).[5]

5 Rishma Dunlop interprets this fear, and the novel's response to its opening question, differently in her article "Archives of Desire: Rewriting Maternal History in Daphne Marlatt's *Ana Historic*."

As a reaction to the fears women have, Annie attempts to empower Mrs. Richards by imagining her history. First, Annie creates a classroom incident in which Mrs. Richards "would match power with power" (92), her own against that of a Father on the school board. Faced with a disruptive student, Mrs. Richards refuses to appear weak and lacking in authority and kicks the Miller boy out of her classroom, thereby challenging both institution (the school board) and male dominance (Fred Miller and his Father).[6] Annie also imagines "a secret friend" (108) for Mrs. Richards in Birdie Stewart. Birdie is truly independent, "flying in the face of family and church" (108), and she schools Mrs. Richards in debauchery, sensuality, and survival. In Birdie's eyes, Mrs. Richards is "reflected differently" (108) and she sees a part of herself she hadn't known before, a part of herself she could not have imagined; and, as she "leap[s] into this new possibility" (139), Annie herself can no longer imagine what Mrs. Richards would say, indicating again for Annie the power of history against imagination. For

> we live in history and imagination. but once history's onstage, histrionic as usual (all those wars, all those judgments), the a-historic hasn't a speaking part. What's imagination next to the weight of the (f)actual? (139)

6 Marlatt also cites this incident as an anti-racist gesture on Mrs. Richards's part. The white student insults a "half-breed" student, which provokes Mrs. Richards's reaction. "Yet she can't quite escape her own conditioning because she's still afraid of the Indians. She hears all the stories and she takes them in. But when she's confronted with the children, she can relate to them. There are two half-breed children in her class. She can relate to them as individuals, and she can see how as people they suffer under that regime. She's also fascinated, because she gets the sense that there is a whole other way of looking at the world. There is that little comment 'their magic is different from ours,' our magic meaning our language, our written language that still can't contain them. It can't contain how they see and who they are" (Marlatt, qtd. in Bowering 104).

By imagining Mrs. Richards's desire for Birdie, Annie enables the possibility for her own lesbian desire for Zoe, and, as Zoe remarks, "you've imagined your way into what she really wants" (140). Like so many other moments in *Ana Historic*, "she" is pluri-signative, ambiguously referring to both Annie and Mrs. Richards: "For Marlatt, the use of the connective 'you' rather than the distancing 'her' among feminists and lesbians facilitates more than the creation of a female scopic economy; it heralds a culture centred on the embracing woman and rich with utopian possibilities" (Chan 68). For Annie, choosing Zoe as her lover and imagining lesbian desire between Mrs. Richards and Birdie "parallel her rejection of masculinist interpretation" of history (Davey 203).[7]

Finally, in another challenge to history, Annie has Mrs. Richards witness the birth of the first white child at Hastings Sawmill.[8] The birth of Jeannie Alexander's child is the most sustained piece of Annie's "official writing"[9] about Mrs. Richards

7 Celine Chan, in "Lesbian Self-Naming in Daphne Marlatt's *Ana Historic*," notes that Annie declares her desire for Zoe outside, in the moonlight, sheltered by trees. Chan finds this significant because "it corresponds to the 'open air' and uncleared 'bushes' (40, 86) into which Annie imagines the historical Ana Richards venturing physically and psychically in her escape from patriarchy towards an unconfused and unrepressed female identity" (69). Similarly, Annie and Zoe declare their desire outside the house, outside "man-made enclosures" (69).

8 The implications of this racialized moment are beyond the scope of this paper but are addressed by Glen Lowry in "Cultural Citizenship and Writing Post-colonial Vancouver: Daphne Marlatt's *Ana Historic* and Wayde Compton's *Bluesprint*."

9 Marlatt has distinguished between the sections of *Ana Historic* written using standard grammar as "scenes from the novel that Annie is trying to write . . . her official writing about Mrs. Richards" and those sections lacking punctuation, initial upper case letters and complete sentences as "her unofficial writing, which is more the shape of musings where her own life becomes tangled up in her imagining of Ana Richards' life" (qtd. in Bowering 100).

and is important because it contains all the complexly connected contradictions introduced and explored by Marlatt and Annie regarding history, imperialism, women, and language in *Ana Historic*. As Gillian Whitlock argues, the "birth of Jeannie's son is . . . a milestone in the colonization of Burrard Inlet and the continuity of a patriarchal order" (para. 21), but, for Mrs. Richards, witnessing this birth is an historic moment that exists "outside history." Officially Jeannie Alexander's confinement is recorded as follows:

> *As to whether he was the first white child on Burrard Inlet I cannot say, but he certainly was the first at Hastings Sawmill, because my mother not only confined Mrs. Alexander, but also afterwards nursed her. There were practically no white children born on Burrard Inlet; . . . white women expecting confinement went to Victoria. You see, there was not a doctor nearer than New Westminster . . .* (*Ana* 117).

The emphasis in this record of childbearing is not Mrs. Alexander or the women who attended her during her confinement but the materiality of the white child — a son — and the absence of doctors. Fighting against the "sense of fraternal community run[ning] through the record" (55), Annie expands the record to include the mothers there. Apprehensively anticipating a birthing scene of screams and pain, Mrs. Richards observes with wonder the calm "elemental creature" (122) Jeannie becomes and the quiet assurance and encouragement the attending women provide. The patriarchal interruption of this scene, in the form of Jeannie's husband, emphasizes the female authority this communal activity of childbirth offers. Mrs. Richards is empowered by her recognition of Mr. Alexander's "underlying discomfort, unease even" (123), and although "she was a woman who knew nothing about such things . . . she was a woman doing women's work" (123), and she now participates in comforting the labouring Jeannie Alexander. An event that

patriarchy tends to construct negatively or simply ignore is a watershed moment for Mrs. Richards as she enters a community of women.

The arrival of this child, however, is also "a linguistic event" (Davey 205) as Jeannie Alexander's labour "is transformed into a metaphor for language by Marlatt" (Kelly 73). As Mrs. Richards watches Jeannie labour, she also sees "something else not Jeannie, not anyone, this was a mouth working against its own articulate urge, opening deep" (125), and she sees the child "a massive syllable of slippery flesh slide out the open mouth" (126). Marlatt consciously connects language and the female body in Annie's construction of Mrs. Richards's memory of this birth: "this secret space between our limbs we keep so hidden — is yet so, what? What words are there? If *it* could speak! — As indeed it did: it spoke the babe, and then the afterbirth, a bleeding mass of meat" (126), and in Annie's description of the female body: "mouth speaking flesh. she touches it to make it tell her present in this other language so difficult to translate. the difference" (126). The connection between language and the female maternal body is unmistakable here, and the importance of this language-body connection is usefully explained in the theories of Margaret Homans, in *Bearing the Word*.

In *Bearing the Word*, Homans engages with a central myth of Western culture, "that the death or absence of the mother . . . makes possible the construction of language and culture" (2), and explores the implications of this myth for women's writing. In doing so, Homans draws on Lacan's view of language — because his is a "psycholinguistic retelling of a myth to which our culture has long subscribed" (6) and one that could affect women writers regardless of its "truth" — and on Chodorow's feminist revision of Freud. Homans then maps "the implications of Chodorow's theory for Lacan's as well as chart[s] the way in which Lacanian terms can transform Chodorow's psychosexual

theory into a revisionary myth of women and language" (6). While Lacan's theories exclude the mother's body, Chodorow's "re-presences" the mother. In her psychoanalytic object-relations theory of motherhood and the reproduction of mothering in mother-daughter relationships, Chodorow claims that the pre-oedipal experiences of boys and girls are different: "because [mothers] are the same gender as their daughters . . . mothers of daughters tend not to experience their infant daughters as separate from them in the same way as do mothers of infant sons" (Chodorow 109). Daughters are not encouraged to separate from their mothers to the extent that sons are, and through her closer attachment to and identification with her mother, a daughter learns nurturance; therefore, women's mothering of daughters reproduces mothers in them. Ultimately, Homans sees Chodorow's portrayal of the mother-daughter bond as favourable and optimistic (27), concluding that

> if the daughter's preoedipal closeness to her mother is accompanied by a presymbolic language of presence [which Homans believes that Chodorow's argument implies], then when the daughter attempts to recreate her symbiotic closeness with her mother, she is also attempting to recreate that presymbolic language. The reproduction of mothering will also be the reproduction of a presymbolic communicativeness, a literal language" (25).

Homans then tests her theories against nineteenth-century literary texts written by women, to discover the ways these texts tap into a "hitherto unwritten and devalued mother-daughter language" (29). What she finds are instances of "bearing the word." "Each instance of bearing the word brings together the thematics of female experience and some aspect of women's special relation to language" (29), and Homans identifies four recurring and connected literary practices of this. First, shifts from figurative to literal language — "literalization" — are

identified, because the differing value placed on figurative and literal language is central to gender differences in language.[10] "In a literary text, the literalization of a figure occurs when some piece of overtly figurative language, a simile or an extended or conspicuous metaphor, is translated into an actual event or circumstance" (30). Literalization subsumes the three other kinds of bearing the word because the remaining three all contain shifts from the figurative to the literal: first, "the repeated figure of a woman who gives birth to or carries a child who represents language" (30); second, "the thematic presentation of women carrying or bearing language itself" (31); and third, "when the writer as woman replicates, in her own relation to literary language and literary history, what her women characters do with language within the thematic frame of the novel" (31). While all kinds of bearing the word do not always occur together, they do occur together often, and this is the case in *Ana Historic*.

If Jeannie Alexander's labour, as suggested earlier, "is transformed into a metaphor for language by Marlatt" (Kelly 73), her labour is also a "literalization" of the birth of language. The language that is born in *Ana Historic* recalls Cixous's *écriture feminine*, which emphasizes the materiality of the female body, although Marlatt replaces Cixous's metaphoric white ink of mother's milk with menstrual blood. Annie relates menstruation to writing when she recalls

> the innate pleasure of seeing on a fresh white pad the first marks of red [and knowing] *i made that!* the mark of myself, my inscription in blood. i'm here. scribbling again. . . .

10 Homans argues that women and "the feminine" are identified in language with "the literal, the absent referent in our predominant myth of language" (4). Conversely, "the masculine" position in language is figurative, and "in the Lacanian myth, language and gender are connected in such a way as to privilege implicitly the masculine and the figurative" (4).

> writing the period that arrives at no full stop. not the hand manipulating the pen. not the language of definition, of epoch and document, language explaining and justifying, but the words that flow out from within, running too quick to catch sometimes, at other times just an agonizingly slow trickle. the words of an interior history doesn't include . . . (90) [11]

Marlatt constructs the act of female writing as a visceral experience in direct opposition to history, just as, in Cixous's analysis, "women's real or imagined experiences of pregnancy and childbirth . . . entail the possibility of a radically different relation to the other" (Sellers xxviii). If mother's milk implies maternity, menstruation holds the potential for maternity, and it is of course Annie's imagined experience of childbirth which introduces her to a previously untapped community of women. As Cixous also suggests:

> Everything will be changed once woman gives woman to the other woman. There is hidden and always ready in woman the source; the locus for the other. The mother, too, is a metaphor. It is necessary and sufficient that the best of herself be given to woman by another woman for her to be able to love herself and return in love that body that was 'born' to her. ("Laugh" 881)

In what could be read as an illustration of Cixous's conjecture, Marlatt's narrator learns: "the real history of women . . . is unwritten because it runs through our bodies: we give birth to each other. . . . it's women imagining all that women could be that brings us into the world" (131). But Jeannie Alexander's labour is also a "literalization" of the birth of a Canadian woman's language, a language that recalls Lee's visceral experiences of

11 Peggy Kelly makes this same point in "Fiction Theory as Feminist Practice in Marlatt's *Ana Historic* and Scott's *Heroine*."

the cadence of Canada, the language born of woman in the new land of Canada.

Annie's imaginative recollection of the birthing scene embodies Homans's literalization, where a literary situation has "the very structure of childbearing, in which something becomes real that did not exist before — or that existed only as a word, a theory, or a 'conception'" (26), *and* an example of Cixous's "woman giving birth to woman." The recollection of Jeannie Alexander's labour ends with musings that suggest Annie experiences this birth as if it were her own:

> to be born in, enter from birth that place (that shoreline place of scarlet maples, since cut down) with no known name — see it, risen in waves, these scarlet leaves, lips all bleeding into the air, given (birth), given in greeting, the given surrounds him now. surrounds her, her country she has come into, the country of her body. (127)

Annie literalizes her own birth in the birth narrative, or, in other terms, through her historical reconstruction delivers her self.

As Frank Davey argues in "The Country of Her Own Body," the images of landscape and female body merge in Annie's recollection: "Here the lost 'nameless' primordial trees, the 'scarlet maples' cut down by woodsmen, become the scarlet labia of the birthing mother" (206). The logging industry — which is evoked in the novel by numerous references to logging practices and quotations from records of the BC logging industry, which "both pays Mrs. Richards' salary in the 1870s and employs Annie's father as an administrator in the 1950s" (Davey 195) — implicates Mrs. Richards as complicit in colonization and signifies Annie as colonized within the patriarchal family dependent on "colonial" industry. But, more importantly, the symbolic linking of the logging industry with the female body makes *Ana Historic*

a story of "Canadian exploitation: a land marked as female is exploited for material profit by a male population — to the exclusion and alienation of women who are required to abet and celebrate the exploitation as well as identify its victim" (Davey 196). The figuration of landscape as female is not uncommon in Canadian (or any) literature, but in *Ana Historic* "the land and woman's body are conceived as mythically contiguous, and the oppression of one as contiguous with that of the other" (Davey 196). What, then, does it mean, in terms of the "urgent and contestatory" linkage between language, place, history and self of postcolonial experience (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, *Post-colonial* 392) to come into "the country of her own body"? An answer to this question is potentially found in the previously quoted passage from Dennis Lee:

> To name your colonial condition is not necessarily to assign explicit terms to it. . . . The weight of the silence can also be conveyed by the sheer pressure behind the words that finally break it. Then to name one's own condition is to recreate the halt and stammer, the wry-self-deprecation, the rush of celebratory elan and the vastness of the still unspoken surround, on which a colonial writer comes to know *his* house, *his* father, *his* city, *his* terrain — encounters them in their own unuttered terms and finds words being born to say them. (517; emphasis in the original)

Ultimately, while the end of Mrs. Richards's story is limited by the colonial mentality of husbandry, Annie's story is opened up by the maternal. By imagining for Mrs. Richards the birth of a child in a colonial setting, Annie finds "words being born" to speak the unuttered terms of her life. She discovers a feminine language, one that opens up the possibilities of her life, within the postcolonial space of Canada. Through her imagined conversations with her mother, Ina, her imaginative history of Mrs. Richards, and her "real" relationship with Zoe, Annie has

been thrice mothered. She has come to know *her* mother, *her* country, *her* body, *her* self, or, as Bowering puts it, Annie has become not only a local Canadian but also a woman (101). Annie comes to know not only her "literal" mother, Ina, but also the surrogate mother of Mrs. Richards (partially representative of the mother country, England), the surrogate mother Zoe, and the mothering capabilities of the Canadian landscape. Annie is able to remember and come to an understanding of Ina, to name herself "Annie Torrent," and not "to repeat history" (*Ana* 62, 144, 152). Annie comes to know that "she, Mrs. Richards, and Ina were all victims of discursive alienation from their own and their mothers' bodies" (Davey 199). She enters, finally, a place in which she names herself, a place both inside and outside, "a room that is alive," where "there were trees, there was a moon," where she could "listen, as i used to listen in the woods to the quiet interplay of wind, trees, rain, creeping things under the leaves — this world of connection:" (*Ana* 151–52). The novel closes, on the final and unnumbered page, reinforcing the close connection between the maternal body, language, and place: "we give place, giving words, giving birth, to each other — she and me" (153).

Closely related to the literalization of childbirth is another instance of bearing the word in *Ana Historic,* the literalization of confinement. Despite the biography Annie constructs for Mrs. Richards, the historical Mrs. Richards is ultimately confined by the record of her in history and must accept Ben Springer's marriage proposal because, as Annie imagines,

> all the other selves she might be were erased — . . . unvalidated, unacceptable, in short. because they weren't the right words. try artist, try explorer — prefaced always by lady, no, it wasn't a choice anyone sane would make.
>
> to fly in the face of common sense, social conventions, ethics — the weight of history. (146)

The word "confinement," which appears in the Hastings Sawmill history records regarding Jeannie Alexander, "holds a crucial place in this narrative. . . . The figurative confinement of childbirth is literalized as the real confinement" of the women of this novel, most notably Mrs. Richards, Ina, and Annie, within imperial patriarchal ideologies (Homans 168).[12] Mrs. Richards is confined by the roles of widow and school teacher, one of which literally confines her in the school room; Ina and Annie are confined by the roles of wife and mother, literalized in the claustrophobic domestic space of the house: "i learned to stay in the house as a good girl should. i am still in the house i move around in all day in the rain" (16).

The literalization of confinement extends into Annie's work for her husband, which is another manifestation of bearing the word in *Ana Historic* (the third instance identified by Homans): "the theme of women characters who perform translations from one language into another or from one medium to another, or who carry messages or letters for other people, or who act as amanuenses or as readers for others, usually men" (31). One model of this literary transmission that Homans cites is Dorothea reading Greek to her scholar husband in *Middlemarch*. As a research assistant to her history professor husband, it is Annie's job to "come to grips with lot numbers and survey maps . . . painstakingly piece together" pages of notes, archival material and xeroxed photographs, and to contribute to Richard's "Big Book" (79). Annie functions as a reader for Richard. In contrast to many of Homans's examples, however, where the language read or transmitted is not understood by the female reader, the "language" Annie is reading for her husband no longer interests

12 Margaret Homans makes this point regarding Gaskell's *My Diary: The Early Years of My Daughter Marianne*, where she interprets the figurative confinement of childbirth to be literalized as the "real confinement of living in small rooms" (168).

her. In fact, it excludes her. This exclusion is the origin of Annie's own writing, for it is during her perusal of archival material on her husband's behalf that she first encountered Mrs. Richards. This instance of bearing the word is subsumed within the other literalizations of *Ana Historic* but is significant, not only for its comments on the role of gender in reading and writing but also because it inspires Annie to consider the history of women, whose "real story begins where nothing is conveyed" (83).

It is Annie's dissatisfaction with the historical texts she reads for Richard that inspires her to contemplate women's positions in history and to take up her own writing about an "a-historic" woman. She imagines Richard's disapproval of her writing:

> this is nothing, i imagine him saying. meaning unreadable. because this nothing is a place he doesn't recognize, cut loose from history and its relentless progress towards some end. this is undefined territory, unaccountable. and so on edge. (81)

Annie's writing and Richard's reaction to it foreground the close but tense connection between history and imagination in Annie's own life. In an interview with Janice Williamson, Marlatt notes that

> if history is a construction and language is also a construction, as we know — in fact, it actually constructs the reality we live and act in — then we can change it. We're not stuck in some authoritative version of the real, and for women that's extremely important, because we always were — the patriarchal version was always the version, and now we know that's not true. We can throw out that powerful little article. When we change language we change the building blocks by which we construct our reality or even our past "reality," history. (52)

The result is "the language of an interior history" (Tostevin 37), a history Annie writes for both herself and Mrs. Richards:

"By writing herself into the empty space of women's activities that were never deemed important enough to be recorded, she crosses the boundaries of a history that excluded her" (Tostevin 37), her mother, and Mrs. Richards.

Mrs. Richards is significant not only because Annie is disappointed that "history married her to Ben Springer and wrote her off" (134) but because Mrs. Richards is

> without history, an ahistoric character whose invented story meshes with the contemporary Annie Richards' own fragmented life. Against the blank page of history that wrote her off, an unspoken urge insists itself into words as Marlatt not only retrieves Mrs. Richards from absence, but insures that the contemporary Annie Richards' personal history, which is also her mother's history, is not repeated. (Tostevin 37)

One way that Marlatt, through Annie, ensures history is not repeated is by imagining "lesbian-maternal texts" (Tostevin 38) that envision new endings for their female characters. By untelling, unravelling the missing maternal elements in these women's relationships — of Ina and Annie, Zoe and Annie, Annie and Ana, Ana and Birdie — so as not to leave them "character[s] flattened by destiny, caught between the covers of a book" (150), they provide "the truth [that] our stories are hidden from us" (79).

The ending Annie and Marlatt provide is "Not a Bad End" (150), as it rewrites mother-daughter relationships and women's relationships to offer other possibilities for "mothers" — both mother country and mother tongue — that differ from the ways in which these have been previously written. Mrs. Richards realizes her lesbian desire for Birdie, Annie has reached an understanding of her mother through her "conversations" with Ina, and Annie enters a lesbian relationship with Zoe. These new and different endings disrupt Annie's connection

with her husband, thereby subverting definitions of history and imagination, blurring them to reproduce another version of history, a new language of history. Once again Marlatt seems to espouse in her fiction Irigaray's argument that "If we keep on speaking the same language together, we're going to reproduce the same history. Begin the same old stories all over again. . . . Words will pass through our bodies, above our heads. They'll vanish, and we'll be lost. Absent from ourselves" (*This Sex* 205). But Marlatt's new language, new stories, are inflected with a significant colonial/postcolonial difference. They are recuperated in a language that also contains all the ambiguities associated with the cadence of the experience of the female Canadian settler.

In *Ana Historic* words pass through bodies, but for Marlatt this represents the unconditioned language that silent women would speak (75). As Kamboureli suggested in the quotation with which this chapter began, Marlatt writes/rewrites history through the bodies of women, and the traces of these women and their bodies are imprinted in Marlatt's language. One way Marlatt challenges history is by exploring the imaginary and refusing to "come back, [when] history calls, to the solid ground of fact" (*Ana* 111), and Marlatt's use of language is central to this challenge. While the use of the word "imaginary" denotes events that are imagined, Lacan's distinction between the "imaginary" — a prelinguistic maternal stage — and the "symbolic" — the "phallocentric" stage of language acquisition — also resonates here. While it is impossible to speak of the language of *Ana Historic* as imaginary in Lacanian terms, there is in *Ana Historic* language that both "unnames" colonial experience in order to "hear" the silence spoken by women *and* subverts the fixed signification of phallocentric language, and is exemplary of Kristeva's semiotic, which disrupts standard discourse and the authoritarian "subject."

Marlatt employs three techniques that clearly undermine the position of "subject" in *Ana Historic*. The first, and this is common to all of Marlatt's writing, is her use of "i," whereby she seeks to subvert the authority attributed to the authorial "I." The second is the slippage between pronouns; "you," "i," and "she" often shift in reference: "that 'you' shifts around quite a lot, because sometimes it's 'you,' Mrs. Richards, a lot of the time it's 'you,' Ina — and sometimes it's 'you' reflexive, anywoman's you" (Marlatt, qtd. in Bowering). Annie indicates this shifting further again when she writes:

> she who is you
> or me
> 'i'
> address this to (129)

Finally, there is a close connection between the central female characters' names: Ina, Annie, and Mrs. Richards. Ironically, Annie is married to Richard; Mrs. Richards has no recorded first name; therefore, Annie names her Ana, "in a slightly estranging combination of Annie and Ina" (Dragland 53). The connection between these women is so close that Annie comes to ask:

> Ana / Ina
> whose story is this?
>
> (the difference of a single letter)
> (the sharing of a not) (74)

This slippage in fixed identity undermines the stable position of subject. The name "Ana" also destabilizes history, for Ana means again, anew; therefore, the a-historic Mrs. Richards becomes ana historic or history anew, a new history (43).

This type of word play is common in Marlatt's writing and

manifests itself in another form: the etymological deconstruction of words. Marlatt pays close attention to the origin and development of words as a way of displacing authority and reopening meaning. It is also a way of establishing a feminine position within language: "I have found that etymology often remembers the feminine sensibility of our inner landscape" (Marlatt and Warland 35);

> hidden in the etymology and usage of so much of our vocabulary for verbal communication (contact, sharing) is a link with the body's physicality: matter (the import of what you say) and matter and by extension mother; language and tongue; to utter and outer (give birth again): . . . to relate (a story) and to relate to somebody, related (carried back) with its connection with bearing (a child); intimate and to intimate; vulva and voluble. (Marlatt, *Touch* 46)

Marlatt's use of language culminates in "women whose bodies and whose bodies' processes become alphabetized and written into language. . . . The language of birthing" (Cooley 76). Obviously Annie's account of labour and childbirth is an example of a bodily process written into language, but Marlatt's use of language throughout *Ana Historic* is also implicitly conscious of the rhythms of the female body:

> writing the period that arrives at no full stop. not the hand manipulating the pen. not the language of definition, of epoch and document, language explaining and justifying, but the words flow out from within, running too quick to catch sometimes, at other times just an agonizingly slow trickle. the words of an interior history doesn't include . . . (90)

Not only is writing related to menstruation, but Marlatt further achieves this same feminine flow of words by manipulating grammar and punctuation, echoing in her use of language the

rhythms and cycles of the female body,[13] thereby rejecting the Lacanian proposition that the source of language is the phallus. For Marlatt the source of language is the womb, and her language thereby resonates with a body of sounds — water sounds/body sounds/womb sounds — that are "fluid, fluent, circling, circuitous" (Cooley 76). One excellent example of this is the repetition of rain in *Ana Historic*. Repeatedly Marlatt's women "move around all day in the rain" (16, 17, 29, 30, 64, 65, 78, 83), a motif that intensifies into a "torrent" (35, 49, 136), which is also the name she chooses for herself (152): Marlatt's repeated connections between the "rhythmically repeated event . . . a small storm, a slow flood subsiding on its own" (62) of menstruation and etymology results in a language that engenders new meaning and a new identity for Annie. Marlatt's language becomes cyclical and generative, metaphorically procreative.

The structure of *Ana Historic,* too, engenders new meaning. It is "a book of interruptions . . . not a novel" (37) that challenges traditional, linear narratives and is self-consciously metafictional. There is a multiplicity of narrative voices woven through *Ana Historic;* excerpts from historical documents, feminist theory, newspapers are interspersed with the apparently fictional material of *Ana Historic*. Marlatt explains further: "I like rubbing the edges of document and memory/fiction against one another. I like the friction that is produced. . . . That's why I used such a hodgepodge of sources in *Ana Historic:* a little nineteenth-century and very local journalism that sounds like a gossip column, a 1906 school textbook, various

13 Dennis Cooley's article "Recursions, Excursions and Incursions: Daphne Marlatt Wrestles with the Angel Language" deals with Marlatt's use of language in detail. Cooley analyzes closely Marlatt's use of syntax, elisions, repetitions; etymology; punctuation; and grammatical anomalies in both *Ana Historic* and *Steveston*. See also Lorraine Weir, "Daphne Marlatt's 'Ecology of Language,'" and Carloyn Hlus, "Writing Womanly: Theory and Practice."

historical accounts, some contemporary feminist theory, and a school teacher's diary from 1873 that was completely fictitious" (Kossew 55). Peggy Kelly has labeled Marlatt's writing "fiction-theory," which she defines as

> a post-modern, self-reflexive and personal form of writing which is informed by a feminist understanding of political and linguistic theory, and is characterized by word-play, the construction of genres, and the position of a tenable female subject. . . . Writing-through-the-body and language-centred writing are the major components of fiction-theory. (69–70)

These components of "fiction theory" figure prominently in *Ana Historic,* but Marlatt's personal form of writing to which Kelly alludes is particularly significant when theorizing the subject formation of the female settler subject, which is undertaken in this novel.

Marlatt, herself, has described *Ana Historic* as "fictionalysis": "A self-analysis that plays fictively with the primary images of one's life, a fiction that uncovers analytically that territory where fact and fiction coincide" ("Self-Representation" 15). Marlatt's own "facts" coincide with fiction in *Ana Historic;* Marlatt, herself an immigrant — her mother twice immigrated — "grew up with two nostalgias . . . the nostalgia for England [and] . . . the nostalgia for Penang" ("Entering" 220). The result is a conflict similar to that experienced by Annie and Ina:

> The nostalgia for England . . . increased at home as our assimilation, as children, increased outside in the neighbourhood and at school. My mother wanted to keep up "English" in our values as we struggled very hard to become Canadian. This led to a deepening neurosis i could neither understand nor address, as it increased my determination to leave all that behind and completely enter into this place here. ("Entering" 222)

Annie, of course, is not Marlatt ("though she may be one of the selves i could be" ["Self-Representation" 245]), but it is "exactly the confluence of fiction (the self or selves we might be) and analysis (of the roles we have found ourselves in, defined in a complex socio-familial weave) — it is in the confluence of these two that autobiography occurs, the self writing its way to life, whole life" ("Self-Representation" 245). The conflux of fact and fiction in *Ana Historic* focuses on the mother-daughter relationship, in which the postcolonial female subject (Annie/Marlatt) negotiates the space between the textual language and the lived space of the female body, in a search for a lost mother that is also a search for self-identity.

For Marlatt, identity, language, and place are psychologically and emotionally, complexly and ambivalently, inseparable from the mother:

> What we first of all remember is this huge body which is our first landscape and which we first remember bodily. We can't consciously remember it, but it's there in our unconscious, it's there in all the repressed babble, the language that ripples and flows — and isn't concerned with making sense. It's concerned with the feel: the feel of words that has something to do with the feel of that body, of the contours of early memory (Marlatt, qtd. in Williamson 185).

The body Marlatt refers to is first and foremost the physical mother's body, but this is conflated with "landscape," and for the female settler subject seeking her identity in an "other" landscape, which is and is not her "mother," the result is a language that attempts to recuperate the mother's body and the body of the new land, that is not her mother's first landscape. For Marlatt, the acts of giving birth and writing are also contiguous:

> like the mother's body, language is larger than us and carries us along with it. it bears us, it births us insofar as we bear it. . . .

> the immediately presented, as at birth — a given name a given world. (Marlatt, *Touch* 46)

This belief makes the written inclusion of women into history particularly relevant because they are metaphorically born through language. It is in her writing about Mrs. Richards that Annie individuates herself, therefore owing her subjectivity in part to Ana Richards. This places Ana in a mothering role within the narrative of *Ana Historic*. Through the surrogate mother-daughter relationship between Ana and Annie, Annie successfully "pulls her self together" (17) and ensures that Annie, Ina, and Ana do not remain "orphaned" (30) in history, in Canada, or in patriarchy.

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"New, Angular Possibilities": Redefining Ethnicity Through Transcultural Exchanges in Marusya Bociurkiw's *The Children of Mary*

DANA PATRASCU-KINGSLEY

Definitions of ethnicity often rely on emphasizing a group's *different* or *distinct* language, culture, and history in relation to others. In the contemporary Canadian cultural context, there is a need to move beyond this binary model of us/them and to redefine ethnicity not in opposition to but in relation to and in dialogue with the Other. In "From Mosaic to Kaleidoscope: Out of the Multicultural Past Comes a Vision of a Transcultural Future" (1991), Janice Kulyk Keefer argues that transculturalism facilitates communication between various people and communities, privileging "interconnection, mobility, and transformation" (16). In interactions that cross cultural lines, the ethnic and gender norms being performed can change, as Marusya Bociurkiw's novel, *The Children of Mary* (2006), shows.

By developing friendships and romantic relationships with people belonging to various cultures, the Ukrainian-Canadians of Bociurkiw's novel learn about the Other and, in the process, also develop new possibilities for performing their own gendered ethnicity. Bociurkiw suggests that transcultural exchanges do not lead to the eradication of difference but to a better understanding of both the Self and the Other. This essay analyzes the intersections of ethnicity, gender, and race in Bociurkiw's novel and looks at the contributions that interactions across cultural lines make to individuals who redefine these constructs as they perform them.

Ethnicity is, like gender, a performative role, which can and does subtly change every time it is performed, especially with performances that involve engagement in transcultural exchanges and challenges to traditional social norms. Judith Butler invites us to see performativity as "not a singular 'act,' for it is always a reiteration of a norm or set of norms" and, at the same time, as a subtle challenge to the "conventions of which it is a repetition" (*Bodies That Matter* 12). Through each performance of a cultural construct like gender or ethnicity, the norms are repeated, but they can also be subtly challenged. Stereotypical manifestations of ethnicity, such as folk dances or national costumes revived for ethnic festivals, are still abundant in contemporary Canadian society. But, as Dawn Thompson explains in her article "Technologies of Ethnicity," they also call for and allow for counter-reactions:

> As the pedagogical narrative of multiculturalism constructs and contains ethnic minority subjects, that technology also contains within it the possibility of resistance in the form of an ethnic performance — or rather, a performance of ethnicity — that promises to rewrite multiculturalism and the nation of Canada. (51)

By refusing to follow a fossilized ethnic performance, the ethnic individual can perform ethnicity dynamically against those very constructs that try to regulate his or her behaviour. State regulations or social norms can be challenged through performance. Ethnicity can be performed in dialogue with other cultures rather than in isolation, and out of this transcultural dialogue, it can emerge transformed.

Marusya Bociurkiw's novel *The Children of Mary* narrativizes several Ukrainian-Canadian ethnicities, demonstrating the extent to which ethnicity can change through performance. The action spans various time frames in the life of its two first-person narrators: Maria, an elderly Ukrainian-Canadian woman who came as an immigrant to Canada in the 1920s, and her granddaughter, Sonya Melnyk, who grows up in Winnipeg and later on moves to Toronto. Maria's memories of her struggle to raise her daughter Tatyana on her own are interspersed with Sonya's memories of growing up with an estranged father, who, as she eventually realizes, molested her sister. Kat, Sonya's sister, dies at a young age in a car accident for which her father is responsible, and this death becomes in both Sonya's and Maria's narratives a trauma of the past that they try to repress but that keeps resurfacing. Sonya, in particular, is haunted by her sister's presence, which is for her connected to her ethnicity. By developing a relationship with her sister's former lover, a Métis woman named Angélique Rondeau, Sonya does, however, manage to arrive at some degree of acceptance of both her sister's death and her ethnic roots. Eventually, Sonya's lesbian relationship with Angélique becomes public within the Ukrainian-Canadian community. The revelation of her sexuality to her ethnic community allows her to reconcile her ethnicity with her sexuality in a way that was not possible for her sister. In *The Children of Mary,* Bociurkiw narrativizes a fruitful transcultural dialogue between a Ukrainian-Canadian and a Métis woman, and between a lesbian woman and her heteronormative ethnic community.

REVISITING THE PAST AND TRADITIONAL ETHNICITY

Traditional static notions of ethnicity are interrogated in *The Children of Mary,* as even the older generation does not inhabit a stereotypical ethnicity imposed by history and location. As a result of alternating between Maria's narrative and Sonya's, the past and the present are not separated but are engaged in a continuous dialogue, which facilitates an understanding of ethnicity as dynamic and yet grounded in history at the same time. Maria is a first generation Ukrainian-Canadian: she arrives in Canada in 1929, and with her husband she goes to live on a farm where she remains for some years to come. However, she is not as strictly circumscribed by her ethnicity and by her community's expectations as other women of her generation might have been: with a husband away at political rallies and workers' strikes, Maria is left with more liberty.

The Ukrainian *baba,* the grandmother who is mythologized in Ukrainian-Canadian culture as the preserver of cultural memory and the one in charge of traditions being respected and passed on (Swyripa, *Wedded to the Cause* 215–56), is usually confined to the space of her own home, farm, and family. Her authority is thus restricted to the domestic sphere and exercised over her children and grandchildren, to "guarantee the physical survival of their group and its commitment to things Ukrainian. In this official community perspective, the Ukrainian peasant immigrant pioneer as woman played a symbolic role similar to that of the French-Canadian mother figure in *la survivance* and shared also in her timelessness" (Swyripa, *Wedded to the Cause* 216). This iconic figure is revisited in *The Children of Mary,* where the readers are allowed access to the grandmother's interior life — to the dream sequences, memories, and thoughts she has in her old age when she has retreated into herself and no longer speaks to the outside world. Maria is an independent

woman who does not spend her time working on the farm but instead learns to operate in the public world at a time when other women did not. As she remembers: "Sold herbs, eggs and vegetables at market. Took in sewing and cleaned English houses. . . . In those days people came to see me for one sickness or another. . . . I learnt as I went along, improvised, poured through old recipe books, asked questions of the Métis and Mennonite women I saw at the market, selling different herbs from mine" (41). Not only is she not isolated within her family circle, but she is able to engage in transcultural dialogue with others so that she can expand her own knowledge; by learning about different herbs, Maria goes beyond the limits of her position as a traditional Ukrainian woman. Bociurkiw does not simply reproduce the stereotype of the Ukrainian *baba,* but develops a complex character in Maria, who, although firmly rooted in the pioneer past, transgresses the limitations imposed on her by traditional gender and ethnic norms. The challenges that Sonya brings to ethnic and gender constructs in the sections of the narrative situated during the present do not appear then as isolated occurrences but as part of a history of resistance.

Women's ability to resist performing traditional ethnicities can be seen in Maria's desire to engage with other women outside of her home. Alliances between minority ethnic or racialized women, such as the ones Maria builds, challenge the traditional norms that required these women to operate only within the private sphere of their homes. Maria communicates across cultural lines with the Métis and Mennonite women at the market and with her best friend, Agnes Lum, a Chinese Canadian. Agnes teaches her "about the Six Evils . . . Wind, Cold, Heat, Dampness, Dryness, and Fire" (99), and they talk together about alternative medicine, united in their reliance on natural remedies passed down to them as part of their respective

cultures. The women maintain their difference from the ethnic majority, but they find a common ground that allows them to build an alliance. They revise and expand their knowledge of plants, as they also revise the ethnicity they have inherited into constructs that suit them and their lifestyles.

The women engaged in resisting traditional norms of ethnic identity see their ethnic minority status in Canada as a bridge across which they can build transcultural connections that allow them to resist the pressures of traditionalism, as well as those of assimilation. Agnes refers to the ethnic majority Canadians as "white ghosts," in opposition to the ethnic minorities or the Native Canadians, who are all metaphorically represented as the "germs" or constructions of Otherness: *"Germs, immigrants, Indians, she said, we was all the same to those white ghosts"* (100; here and through, the italic type is in the original). A Chinese-Canadian woman and a Ukrainian-Canadian woman are allied in their being constructed as non-white (that is, as "visible minorities") by the Canadian society of their time. While Bociurkiw does not elide differences between Agnes and Maria — they each practice their own kind of alternative medicine — she points out the ways in which race and ethnicity operate in similar ways as constructions of Otherness. In 1930s Canada, Maria is considered part of the visible minorities group, as her friend, Agnes, recognizes. Consequently, she builds alliances with other marginalized women like herself.

THE DANGER OF "POSITIVE" ETHNIC STEREOTYPES

Ethnic Others are sometimes stereotyped by ethnic majority Canadians in "positive" terms, such as family-oriented, hospitable, and fun-loving. The stereotypes attributed to various cultures vary and are sometimes adopted by specific ethnic groups because they wish to put their difference in a positive

light. Bociurkiw's novel, however, underlines the dangers in any kind of stereotype, positive or not, by imagining Ukrainian-Canadian characters whose understanding of their ethnicity is very different. For example, Sonya's ironic comments with respect to traditional Ukrainian hospitality underline her desire to distance herself from ethnic stereotypes, while her mother and grandmother, members of older generations, find comfort in this kind of "positive" stereotype. As Sonya observes:

> A Ukrainian cooking show from Winnipeg — that, according to my mother, community members had fought long and hard to get on the air — featured an extremely buxom woman in low-cut embroidered blouse and apron mixing up impossibly complex recipes while waxing philosophical about the hospitality and warmth of the Ukrainian people. When I pointed out to my mother that she and my grandmother hated having people over for dinner and always had, my mother snapped at me to get her puffers, she was a little short of breath and feeling *stressed*. (112)

The cooking show on TV consists of a series of ethnic stereotypes that the narrator recognizes: the buxom woman, the embroidered blouse, and Ukrainian warmth and hospitality. The woman on TV is performing her ethnicity in a way that allows both members of the Ukrainian-Canadian community and the non-Ukrainian communities in Canada to focus on those celebratory aspects of difference that Janice Kulyk Keefer characterizes as "radically incomplete manifestations of our ethnicity" (*Dark Ghost* 22). Bociurkiw suggests that some of these celebratory aspects, while sanctioned by some Ukrainian Canadians (Sonya's mother, in this passage), are regarded by others as stereotypes that demand a performance of ethnicity that is limiting.

In patriarchal communities, women's ethnicity is traditionally connected to "values that are stereotypical for their sex: motherhood, sexual purity, dedicated service, piety, helpfulness, retiring modesty" (Swyripa, "The Mother of God" 356). These values, arising from the woman's position within a patriarchal society, can only be questioned if ethnicity is perceived as a performative role that one can and does alter with each performance, reinforcing some cultural norms while challenging others. In *The Children of Mary,* ethnic femininity is revealed to be a many-layered, malleable construction dependent upon how one performs it and upon how it is seen by those outside of the community. Sonya imagines her lover, Angélique, "believing the lie of femininity as she eyed the fall of a skirt on a girl's thigh, the curl of hair down her back. Blissfully unaware of the effort, the work behind it all. I imagined her not being able to be a girl. The pain in that, but also, the relief" (68). Sonya sees this kind of gender performance based on heterosexual norms as a "lie" that attempts to present femininity as "natural," in the same way, I would argue, that certain aspects of ethnicity are normalized. Maria remembers making "the *korovai,* the wedding bread" for her daughter's wedding, and she explains what the meaning of this ethnic custom is: "*korovai* symbolizes sacrifice, supposedly sacrifice of two people for each other" (144). This is the lie perpetuated by custom. The reality, as Maria knows it, involves a different sacrifice: "But really it is sacrifice of women, to continue the great tradition of female suffering. Bloodline, blood sacrifice. Blood on a mother's hands" (144). Maria recognizes that, by passing on the expectations of marriage and sacrifice, the mother perpetuates constructs of ethnicity and gender that are detrimental to women's happiness and well-being. Seeing the *korovai* as a symbol of mutual sacrifice of a man and a woman rather than as a symbol of female suffering is a refusal to acknowledge how restrictive women's roles are in a patriarchal society.

Gender and ethnic expectations overlap in this text, as a community's own preconceptions are revealed: the Ukrainian community in Winnipeg, seen mostly through Tatyana and her friends, and through Maria's narrative, has its own norms regulating the behaviour of Ukrainian men and women. Mrs. Woschinski, Tatyana's best friend, for example, is always happy to talk to Sonya about her daughter: *"my Mary, she got married five years ago, he's not Ukrainian, but dey have two nice cheeldren; deys living in Chee-cago, he's a doctor dere, she's still working, she's doing dat, I dunno what you call it, da bookkeeping. And Terry, hees not married, hees living here in Vi-nee-peg"* (87). A representative of the older generation, she has very precise opinions with respect to what Ukrainian ethnicity entails for men and women, and her daughter Mary meets with her approval because she embodies the ideal of Ukrainian femininity: she is married and has children. That she married a non-Ukrainian is seen as a fault redeemed only by Mary's motherhood; her job does not register high on her mother's list and neither does anything her son, Terry, does since he is not married. When Sonya goes to Winnipeg she is always asked, *"who's your boyfriend?"* and *"when's the big wedding?"* (55). No one asks about her life in Toronto. Her job there does not mean anything to her mother or to other Ukrainian-Canadian women. Sonya observes that "almost fifteen years working in a hospital as a ward clerk didn't register very high on Mrs. Woschinski's meter of womanly propriety. There was no husband, there were certainly no children, to raise my grade" (88). Tatyana, Mrs. Woschinski, and her daughter, Mary Woschinski, see the performance of gender roles other than those of wife and mother as a failure to embody Ukrainian femininity. The normalization of heterosexuality makes the lesbian an invisible minority, whose very existence is occluded. Sonya's life in Toronto is made invisible by everybody's refusal to acknowledge that she does have a life there, which does not

involve a boyfriend, marriage, or children. The fact that Sonya is lesbian, or that Terry is gay, cannot even register in their families' stereotypical constructions of gendered ethnicity: in the community, Sonya is simply codified as not a proper Ukrainian woman and Terry, who "would bear no offspring to carry the family name" (87), as not a proper Ukrainian man.

MULTIFACETED ETHNICITY AND GENDER PERFORMANCE

In the novel Bociurkiw contrasts static constructions of ethnicity, which, like heteronormativity, are very restrictive, to the many aspects of identity that intersect in one person. Speaking of her lesbian lover Chris, Sonya comments about various gender categories and the possibility that one performs more than one set role:

> She held doors for me, carried my grocery bags. What was I around her, more girl, less lesbian? Less feminist, more queer? What was *she,* if not woman? Butch, femme, boy, girl: words changed shape, expanded around her, acquired new, angular possibilities. (152–53)

The multiplicity of gender and one's ability to perform various roles that intersect with one another are made evident in this passage. Sonya does not perform the stereotype of the Ukrainian woman that Mrs. Woschinski has in mind but a multitude of positions that continue to evolve and change shape. In the process, she challenges assumptions about what defines Ukrainian ethnicity, and what defines femininity.

At first, Sonya sees her Ukrainian ethnicity as a difference that sets her apart from others and prevents her from belonging in Winnipeg or in Toronto's queer community. She says about her desire to live in a co-op house with two other lesbian women

in Toronto: "I wanted badly to assimilate, to lose my prairie ways and the freakish, untranslatable rituals of my past" (48). Even as an adult, she wants to leave behind rituals she associates with both the trauma of ethnicity and the trauma of her sister's death. The metaphor of the flood as trauma and those figures of Ukrainian folklore, the *rusalky,* or water nymphs — "spirits of those poor, desperate women whose last act of great courage was to drown themselves" (3) — reappear throughout the text as symbols of Ukrainian ethnicity. In the first section of the book, Maria tells her granddaughter Sonya that

> life isn't some kind of recipe: list of ingredients, start with this, finish there. History is more complicated than that, believe you me, beyond the reach of even my impressive list of herbal cures.
>
> But it's true my dear, although I know you could care less, that tragedy cleanses, in its own barbaric way.
>
> A flood is a warning. But maybe, also, a new beginning. (3–4)

The story of Sonya's past and that of her ancestors cannot be controlled: like the flooding rivers, her ethnicity resurfaces and intersects with other aspects of her life. The flood is a metaphor for the past that resurfaces, for the history that threatens to engulf Sonya if she will let herself remember it. Although Sonya tries to distance herself from her past by choosing allegiances with a different community (the lesbian community in Toronto), it is something that floods her whenever she returns to Winnipeg or meets with Angélique. The metaphor of the flood points to the destructive and constructive aspects of the past that make their way into one's present. Those traditional aspects of ethnicity that one might reject nonetheless resurface with each performance, forming the basis of what is being re-envisioned. It is out of the remains of the old that the new can be created.

Sonya Melnyk initially attempts to separate aspects of her

identity, and distance herself from her ethnicity, which she relegates to the past. At first Sonya thinks Toronto is a place where she can transform herself: "This was a city where I could be someone different, someone brighter and more upbeat, someone *into being positive, a people person,* leaving my heavy sulking face behind" (46). Stepping into a new identity, already laid out for her by stock phrases such as "people person," is a difficult proposition, but Sonya tries to reinvent herself by moving to a new city and adopting a pre-made identity, which she sees as contrasting her ethnic identity. In Toronto, she meets Angélique Rondeau, and both of them deny the traumatic memories that connect them to Winnipeg and, by extension, deny their respective ethnicities. In their first encounter, they introduce themselves as Sandra and Angel, and they both claim they are from Toronto (66), choosing to perform for each other a kind of neutral identity, disconnected from their respective ethnicities. Toronto symbolizes for both of them a space where they can reinvent themselves, and they can have casual sex, without acknowledging any emotional connections either to each other or to their pasts. Families and past lives in Winnipeg, which would complicate their encounter, are put aside in their mutual attempt at separating their lesbian identity, which they see as part of the present, from their ethnic and racialized identity, which at this point in the novel they still see as confined to the past.

This attempted separation of various aspects of identity underlines the ways in which gender, ethnicity, and race intersect at the site of bodies that are Othered by society because of their apparent difference. In *Bodies that Matter,* Butler invites us to

> rethink the scenes of reproduction and, hence, of sexing practices not only as ones through which a heterosexual imperative is inculcated, but as ones through which boundaries of racial distinction are secured as well as contested. Especially at those

> junctures in which a compulsory heterosexuality works in the service of maintaining hegemonic forms of racial purity, the "threat" of homosexuality takes on a distinctive complexity. (18)

The heteronormativity of an ethnic community in Canada is related to the desire to preserve an ethnically "pure" community, as we have seen in Mrs. Woschinski's lamentations that her daughter married a non-Ukrainian and that her son is gay ("not married" is what she tells Sonya), and that neither one of them has produced the "cookie-cutter-perfect Ukrainian offspring" that their mother hoped for (87). Sonya and Terry challenge heteronormativity as well as the hopes for the survival of a pure Ukrainian community in Canada. Angélique's case is probably similar, in that she, too, frustrates the hopes of perpetuating the Métis community, although this is not discussed in the novel, which focuses mostly on Sonya's explorations of her identity.

In the transcultural relationships between Kat and Angélique, and later between Sonya and Angélique, two taboos are broken at the same time. As Judith Butler points out, "homosexuality and miscegenation . . . converge at and as the constitutive outside of a normative heterosexuality that is at once the regulation of a racially pure reproduction" (*Bodies That Matter* 167). The perpetuation of ethnic and racial groups is connected to the perpetuation of bloodlines, to ethnic and racial reproduction; miscegenation appears as a threat to the racial purity of the group (since potential offspring would be of mixed race), while homosexuality is seen as a threat to reproduction. The taboos against both are a reflection of the community's desire for self-preservation, a desire for maintaining ethnic and racial groups. Sonya recounts how, when Sister Paraskeva, a nun involved with a Catholic youth group, "The Children of Mary," that she and Kat had joined, saw Kat and Angélique "necking in the park near the church," she "wanted to call the police, but Ma talked her out of

it. I wasn't sure what they were most freaked about: Kat kissing another girl, or Angélique being Indian" (29). Angélique is here identified as "Indian," not as Métis, because what matters in this instance is that she is not white: she is singled out by the Ukrainian-Canadian community as a racialized Other. Kat challenges both heteronormativity and the taboo on miscegenation because she has a relationship with a Métis woman and does not advance the community's hope for ethnically pure reproduction.

Sonya Melnyk also challenges her community's expectations about Ukrainian femininity, but she is reinscribed by her family and her community's expectations every time she goes back to Winnipeg: she is seen by others as primarily a Ukrainian-Canadian woman in Winnipeg and a lesbian in Toronto. The intersection of the two happens when she meets Angélique again in Winnipeg. Angélique goes to Sonya's house to return Sonya's driver's licence, which fell out of her pocket in the hotel room where they had sex earlier. It is through this turn of events that Angélique and Terry are outed, and so is Sonya — to a still incredulous family that insists it is all Angélique's fault. Tatyana is enraged: *"You,* she said pointing to Angélique, *you the Indian girl that made my daughter Katya crazy and bad. Now you stickin' your nose in my only livin' daughter's life"* (163). The Other(ed) in their midst, the Métis woman, is blamed as the source of both Kat's and Sonya's transgressions. She is immediately identified as "the Indian girl," which suggests that her racialized body is seen as more of a threat and a temptation than the fact that she is a lesbian.

The theme of the Native woman who is blamed for being an object of desire that leads whites astray is taken up by Terry Goldie in his study of the figure of the Indigene in Canadian, Australian, and New Zealand literatures, *Fear and Temptation*. Goldie describes the Indigene as an "object of white desire and white fear" (84): the Indigenous man is associated with violence

that resists domination, while the Indigenous woman "represents the attractions of the land, but in a form which seems to request domination" (65). The figure of the Indigenous woman is likewise ambivalent: at times she can represent the temptation of "positive Indigenisation," while at other times the white man's fear of "negative indigenisation, a destructive takeover of the soul," is projected upon her (72). In *The Children of Mary,* the Métis woman is seen by the Ukrainian-Canadian community as impossible to resist (tempting) and destructive to the community's cultural values (feared). In Tatyana's view, Angélique "corrupts" Kat (and Sonya) in the sense of both seducing her by turning her into a lesbian and tainting her whiteness and her Ukrainian ethnicity. The Aboriginal woman in this case inspires equally temptation and fear. As racialized Other and lesbian, the presence of Angélique in the Melnyks' house is a challenge of both gender and racial taboos. She is blamed for Kat's and Sonya's performance of a sexual identity that is not sanctioned by the norms of the Ukrainian-Canadian community, and by laying the blame on her, the community also refuses to accept the idea that any one of its female members can define her identity outside of the roles traditionally prescribed for women.

Angélique's Métis identity further complicates the intersections of race and ethnicity, as well as the roles that both history and self-definition play in the formation of ethnic and racial constructs. After a long political struggle, the Métis were formally recognized in the Canadian Constitution of 1982 as an Aboriginal people (Dickason 189). Recognition is something they have fought for since the Louis Riel rebellions of 1869–70 and 1885, which did not succeed in establishing the Métis nation but remained in their collective memory as a significant historical moment for the way they define their community. Olive Dickason observes that their "history has become more important than biology in defining the Métis, Canada's hidden

people" (192). At present, self-definition and identification with a collective history, way of life, and community is what loosely defines the Métis. There is no national Métis registry and various Métis groups across Canada use various criteria of defining Métis identity (Dickason 190–99). Moreover, there is no rule about the proportion of white and Indigenous bloodlines in one's ancestry; "today, 'Métis,' in both its English and French versions, has been generally accepted in Canada for all Amerindian/white admixtures" (Dickason 190). The Métis are defined on the basis of mixed race, and at the same time they are recognized as an Aboriginal people in Canada. Angélique is of mixed race, and yet her whiteness is denied by the Ukrainian-Canadian community, who identify her solely as "Indian."

THE PERFORMANCE OF GENDER AND ETHNIC IDENTITY THROUGH STORYTELLING AND LANGUAGE

The Children of Mary presents women's lives through their own eyes, with a focus on the alliances that these women build with each other. The text's alternation of Maria and Sonya as narrators indicates that Sonya's transgressions are not limited to the present but are in fact deeply connected to the past, both through the history of women that connects grandmother to granddaughter and through the history of Ukrainians in Canada. Moreover, the stories her father tells Sonya about Maria's husband, Nestor Marchyshyn, provide an even larger context for Sonya's own narrative of resistance, which becomes part of a larger Ukrainian-Canadian narrative. Bociurkiw's choice of alternating the story of a first-generation immigrant woman with that of a third-generation Ukrainian Canadian allows her to present two very different perspectives on ethnicity and gender, thus reinforcing the performative nature of these constructs and the changes they undergo with each performance.

Tatyana, a second-generation Ukrainian Canadian, is not given a voice in which to tell her own story, possibly out of a sense that hers is partly Maria's and partly Sonya's story. With the voice of one generation missing between them, Maria's and Sonya's narratives emphasize the distance between how women of two different generations inhabit and challenge their gender and ethnic roles. These two narratives, set in different time frames, enter into a dialogue with each other, underscoring the dynamic nature of ethnicity that is continuously re-evaluated and transformed from generation to generation and from historical moment to historical moment.

In the stories that the Ukrainian-Canadian female narrators tell, Ukrainian-Canadian men appear to be caught in oppositions between their gender roles, which dictate that they be providers for their family, and their ethnicity, which in 1930s' and 1940s' Canada poses an obstacle to their finding gainful employment. Maria's husband, Nestor, is to her a "good-for-nothing husband" (40) because he cannot provide for his family. The ethnic man is emasculated by the society of the time by being rendered incapable of occupying the position of provider for his family, but Nestor rebels against the socio-political conditions that keep him down by joining the strikes and marches of the unemployed, which are taking place all over Canada during the Depression. Because of that, to Tatyana's husband, Mike Melnyk, Nestor Marchyshyn is a hero, somebody who has the courage to speak up and fight for *"our people"* (131), somebody to be proud of and *"tell your chelldren"* about (131). The stories he tells his daughter Sonya about Nestor create a mythology of resistance to which she can then connect her own life story. Terry Woschinski's transgression of ethnic and gender roles, in that he is gay and "would bear no offspring to carry the family name" (87), is then not an isolated occurrence either: he, too, appears in the narrative as part of a string of Ukrainian men

who have rejected some of their traditional gender roles and have fought oppression.

The male characters' rebellion against the crippling constructs of their ethnic masculinity allows them to redefine their masculinity as a more dynamic concept. But their actions also have a great impact on the lives of the women around them: Maria is left to care for her young daughter alone, and Tatyana raises her two daughters mostly alone as well. When Sonya hears her father's stories about her maternal grandfather, she asks him "about Nestor's homelife. Didn't he have responsibilities? Hadn't he abandoned his own flesh and blood, rarely sending money, leaving for days and weeks and months on end? Wasn't he a bit of a deadbeat, for all his beautiful words?" (132). Mike is "a lot like Nestor" — a "builder of yarns, master of hyperbole, someone who lied and charmed his way through life" (131). Manipulators of language, Mike and Nestor both evade the constricting realities of their lives through storytelling, which, Bociurkiw suggests, is a choice that has a deep impact on their families. Mike and Nestor rebel against the roles assigned to them, but, as Sonya's reaction to Mike's stories demonstrates, their wives and daughters perceive their struggles for freedom and equality differently. Moreover, there are traumas, like Kat's death and the fact that she was molested by her father as a child, that cannot be erased through storytelling. The women in this text are deeply marked by men's choices, or, rather, by their perceived lack of choices in the society in which they live.

The identity of the male characters in *The Children of Mary* is performed through the stories they tell but is framed by the female narrators' stories. Moreover, the ethnic identity of all the characters is framed by their existence in a linguistic space dominated by the English language. Bociurkiw uses accented English to replicate the speech of characters who maintain strong linguistic ties to their Ukrainian ethnicity. To emphasize

the distance between Sonya's understanding of Ukrainian ethnicity and the older generation's sense of connection to it, older Ukrainian-Canadian characters quoted in Sonya's narrative are depicted as having a very strong, almost comical, accent in English, perhaps because they are closer to the Ukrainian language than they are to English and yet are forced to speak in English to their children and grandchildren, for whom Ukrainian is at best a second language. The uneasy relations between generations are underscored by the use of accented English that situates the older generation in the past and the younger ones closer to assimilation. Sonya's and Mrs. Woschinski's or Mike Melnyk's linguistic abilities in English indicate not only that they belong to two different generations but also that they differ with respect to their embodiment of Ukrainian ethnicity (Sonya's ethnicity is not linguistically marked). Bociurkiw thus brings to the forefront aspects of ethnicity that are often invisible, such as the relationship that the ethnic Other has to the English language and to the language of his or her community. While some members of the Ukrainian-Canadian community are linguistically marked by their accent, Bociurkiw points out that accented English and knowledge of Ukrainian are not necessary to embody Ukrainian-Canadian ethnicities. Second- or third-generation Ukrainian Canadians, such as Sonya Melnyk, redefine their ethnicity in ways that reflect their present status as invisible minorities within Canada.

PERFORMANCE POSSIBILITIES AND TRANSCULTURALISM

Interactions with individuals outside of one's cultural group lead to ethnicity being performed in dynamic ways, which challenge the repetition of established norms. According to Janice Kulyk Keefer, transcultural exchanges focus on "the permeability

of borders between formerly ghettoized groups, on the kind of working hybridity that occurs when we read or listen to or watch the Other not as a representation of something safely exotic, but as an obliquely-angled version of ourselves" ("The Sacredness of Bridges" 109). Sonya can redefine her Ukrainian-Canadian ethnicity as a result of her transcultural interactions with Angélique, whose presence for the Christmas Eve dinner asserts her acceptance, however uneasy, into the Melnyk family. Sonya says, "She's staying" (165), and through this invitation she makes "visible" for the first time her lesbian identity in the context of her own Ukrainian community. The evening is uneasy and pleasant at the same time, as stereotypical representations of Ukrainianness are displayed and challenged. Mr. Medvichnyk delivers "a long, rambling speech on behalf of the Veterans' Association," declaiming "his great joy at Ukraine's independence, at the holiness of the season, at the beauty of Ukrainian families like ours gathered together in peace and harmony" (165). To underscore the disparity between the stereotypes that his words imply and the actual families present at the gathering, Sonya goes on: "Angel came and stood beside me, putting her arm around my shoulder like she was my husband and I was Donna Reed in *Father Knows Best*" (165). Through references to both ethnic and gender stereotypes, Bociurkiw comments with humour on the clash between performative ethnicity and gender that is continuously evolving, and ossified notions of the same that exist only as objects of mockery. The "Ukrainian families . . . gathered together in peace and harmony" (165) to which Mr. Medvichnyk makes reference include, in actuality, Mary Woschinski and her Anglo husband, Steve Jones; Terry Woschinski, who is gay and single; Mrs. Woschinski, who just found out about her son's homosexuality; Maria, who no longer speaks to anyone; Tatyana Melnyk, who has just found out that Sonya and Angélique are a couple. The ideal Ukrainian nuclear

family is praised but missing, because, as is obvious throughout the narrative, it has never existed. The men in *The Children of Mary* are either mostly absent (Maria's husband, who has gone off to social protests and workers' strikes) or abusive and distant (Tatyana's husband); the women are the ones left to raise the children on their own. Even in the case of secondary characters, such as Agnes Lum or Mrs. Woschinski, it is unclear what has happened to their husbands.

The last two sections of the book, which are both part of Sonya's narrative, underline her return to remembering the past not as something stifling, as she thinks about it for a lot of her narrative, but as a possibility for regeneration and rebirth. Sonya's relationship with Angélique, which continues in Toronto, is "about Kat, in a way, and about my Baba, about a shared history I couldn't find anywhere else in this city" (191). The two have a shared private history related to Kat and Winnipeg, a history metaphorized again as a flooding river: "history and memory, an overflowing river brackish with waste and chemicals, drawing us in, again" (192). Their past and their present are as impossible to contain as overflowing water, which brings destruction and regeneration at the same time. This river of Sonya's and Angélique's memories draws them back into their shared, though not identical, past, which, Bociurkiw implies, is the basis on which they can build a stronger relationship in the present. Unlike Sonya's previous lovers, Angélique knows some of Sonya's past and was herself traumatized by Kat's death. The common ground they discover allows Sonya slowly to become more interested in recuperating parts of her past and integrating them into the present.

The last section of the text, "The River," is narrated by Sonya but parallels the beginning section, which has the same title but is narrated by Maria. It thus reconnects Sonya in a way to her grandmother's world. However, this is not a return into the

past: instead, it allows her to integrate her newfound interest in herbal medicine, which is connected to her family's history and to her cultural heritage, with her identity as part of the queer community in Toronto. Like her grandmother before her, she is able to help other people, and she, too, gets recipes from others, engaging in a transcultural exchange: she reads her grandmother's recipes, learns from her teacher, who is Polish, and gets from Angélique "a recipe of her mom's, for red burdock tea" (193). On the walks through the city with Angélique, she learns to see this space as haunted by "the lost rivers," by a "history that aches for having been left behind" (202). Sonya reads Toronto as a space haunted by others, a space to be better understood by remembering one's own ancestral history. Remembering her connection to the history of her people facilitates her different reading of Toronto, the space in which she now lives. For Sonya, the rivers of history go even further than personal history (with which she can finally come to terms, with Angélique's help) to the history of what is now Canada. Toronto's Garrison Creek, long buried beneath the city, makes her remember how "Indians who lived off this river got pushed off it by settlers. Seems like the city can't get rid of its bones, its watery roots, its bloody arteries, no matter how much it tries" (203). Sonya and the city both have connections to the past they might want to sever, but the past, like the lost rivers, continues to haunt them, to flood into the present.

In Bociurkiw's text, history haunts the present and, like a flood, also allows for new beginnings. Ukrainian ethnicity in Canada is both re-membered and re-imagined in the dialogue with Others, so that the past nurtures the present rather than stifling it. The transcultural alliances that the Ukrainian-Canadian female characters build with other ethnic minority women suggest that gender, racial, and ethnic self-definitions, as well as the ways in which Others see us, can be interrogated

and refashioned when interactions amongst cultures take place. Bociurkiw opens up in *The Children of Mary* "new, angular possibilities" (152–53) for performing an ethnicity rooted in the past and relevant to the present. As she invites us to understand, an individual can challenge traditional norms for performing ethnicity by rebelling against some community norms, while also maintaining meaningful links to that community and its past.

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The Elegiac Loss of the English-Canadian Self and the End of the Romantic Identification with the Aboriginal Other in Leonard Cohen's *Beautiful Losers*

JESSE RAE ARCHIBALD-BARBER

As the title of the novel suggests, *Beautiful Losers* (1966) is about loss and the consolatory strategies that people use to respond to loss. Throughout the novel, the unnamed narrator laments the deaths of his wife, Edith, and his lifelong friend, F. He also dwells on Catherine Tekakwitha, the seventeenth-century "Iroquois Virgin" (3), who was a pivotal figure in Canada's religious past. On a broader level, the novel involves the loss of the Self and the search for a cultural identity, particularly for the modern English Canadian. Indeed, the promise of a unified national identity, which lies at the base of Confederation, has not been realized in Canadian society. Rather, a legacy of cultural displacement has been passed on through the historical relations among First Nations, Inuit, French, Métis, English, and American cultures,

as well as by all the people from other cultures who have immigrated to Canada more recently.[1] To further complicate matters, the novel addresses the loss of the treatment of the human as a spiritual being as a result of the mechanization of the modern world, the expansion of secular and authoritarian systems, and the loss of connection between the Self and Other. Finally, the novel addresses both the overall loss of a shared sense of transcendent meaning and also the strong sense of the reduction of traditional metaphysics to a closed material system.

The central issue here, however, is how Cohen responds to these various losses by turning to Aboriginal themes and images for consolation. In the seventeenth-century scenes of the novel, Cohen depicts the conversion of a Mohawk village to Christianity, with the displacement of the people's ideas of the afterlife. By extension, he shows how an Aboriginal culture was replaced by a Western colonial system and then how this system subsequently became mechanized and empty of transcendent meaning in the modern world. With the breakdown of Western forms of transcendence, Cohen searches for alternatives and treats Aboriginal forms of immanence as a way of returning to a spiritual connection with the land that existed prior to colonization. Thus, Cohen turns to Aboriginal traditions in order to restore a sense of spiritual immanence to modern identity, an identity that includes the human body and the machine. However, Cohen also reveals the problematic consequences of using an underlying Romantic Aboriginal spiritual archetype to respond to the loss of a shared sense of transcendent value in Western culture. By implication, Cohen shows how colonial assimilation led to the negation not only of Aboriginal identity

1 In this context, the issue of identity is more complicated, as many modern English Canadians come from a variety of cultures. Cohen himself descends from a Polish and Lithuanian-Jewish background, which perhaps explains his distance from the early English-Canadian colonial tradition.

but also of English-Canadian identity. Cohen treats this issue extremely self-consciously. By the end, he recognizes that the romanticization of the Aboriginal Other is a historical fiction. To escape this position, Cohen goes beyond the old relation between the English-Canadian Self and the Aboriginal Other to a universal concept of magic in order to restore spiritual meaning and consolation in the modern world.

THE CHURCH AND THE DISPLACEMENT OF ABORIGINAL CULTURES

Canadian colonial history progressed through a series of displacements of Aboriginal cultures. As the Christian church and its consolatory traditions were integral to the colonial process, Cohen's narrator is uncompromising in his indictment of the religious establishment: "I accuse the Church of killing Indians" (50). The sense of "killing" here is related to the process of cultural assimilation and conversion, but, with the allusion to genocide, the narrator further considers the decimation of Native populations by diseases introduced by colonization. The narrator is a historian who has "stumbled on the truth about Canada" — "the Plague" (37) — and this truth haunts him, as he recognizes the unsettling fact that a holocaust lies at the beginning of Canadian history.

The historian-narrator has been studying a certain Native tribe that is representative of the most extreme victims of the colonial past:

> Their brief history is characterized by incessant defeat. The very name of the tribe, A — s, is the word for corpse in the language of all the neighboring tribes. There is no record that this unfortunate people ever won a single battle, while the songs and legends of its enemies are virtually nothing but a sustained howl of triumph. My interest in this pack of failures betrays my character. (5)

Cohen puts the tribe's name under erasure, though its first letter is left — the first letter of the English alphabet — providing a symbolic source for the novel's representation of an originary loss and the resulting victimization of colonialism. Indeed, in the modern scenes of the novel, the narrator's wife, Edith, one of the few remaining descendants of the tribe, commits suicide. After his wife's death, the narrator becomes even more obsessed not only with the A — s, but also with the history of Catherine Tekakwitha and her Mohawk village. Significantly, the narrator's research exposes the aggressive displacement of Aboriginal traditions through Christian conversion.

To see the significance of Cohen's focus on this level of victimization, it is helpful to look at a representative early English-Canadian poem that romanticizes Christian conversion and the loss of Native cultures: Duncan Campbell Scott's "The Onondaga Madonna" (1898). The sonnet is a classic instance of the colonial gaze that views the Aboriginal as a "tragic savage" (3) — heroic but ultimately doomed. Scott depicts the Natives as resisting the transition from the old to the new ways. The Onondaga mother sits in a "careless pose" (1), but she will not accept her fate quietly: "Her rebel lips are dabbled with the stains / Of feuds" (7–8). Thus, although she is captured in the poet's colonial gaze, the stain of blood remains a symbol of resistance to the assimilation of her identity into Canadian society.[2] Nonetheless, hers is an ironic struggle, as she is already in the process of being assimilated, particularly in terms of the dilution of Aboriginal bloodlines, as she is pale, and her child is "paler" (11) — the

2 Part of this resistance is to the poetic form itself, as it is a Petrarchan sonnet in which the octave deals with the past, while the sestet deals with the present and future. Lynch references D. M. R. Bentley for "demonstrat[ing] the ways in which the sonnet form conveys a sense of its subject's imprisonment within alien conventions" (38).

"latest promise of her nation's doom" (10). Furthermore, on a symbolic level of converting Aboriginal peoples to Christianity, the figure of the woman and child takes the shape of a supreme archetype, like the Virgin Mary and baby Jesus. However, she does not passively accept her suffering with humility: her "rebel lips" still seek revenge, and this is further passed on to her child, whose "heavy brows" (14) "will not rest" (14), presumably until revenge is attained. Nonetheless, Scott intimates that the Natives are "doomed" because they will not willingly assimilate to the culture of English Canada. This cluster of archetypal inversions lies at the heart of the Romantic assumptions and contradictions of the age.

From a more critical perspective, Cohen openly explores the problems of the colonial gaze and the appropriation of the Aboriginal Other in early Canada. In terms of cultural practices and the metaphysical beliefs that support them, Cohen depicts scenes of assimilation taking place in Catherine Tekakwitha's seventeenth-century Mohawk village. A priest speaks to a group of villagers about banning a game that involves sticking fingers in each other's ears (a game that F. later recapitulates as the Telephone Dance):

> Now, my children, this is what awaits you. Oh, you can keep your fingers where they are. See. A demon will place round your neck a rope and drag you along. A demon will cut off your head, extract your heart, pull out your intestines, lick up your brain, drink your blood, eat your flesh, and nibble your bones. But you will be incapable of dying. Though your body be hacked to pieces it will revive again. (86)

Because of the game's sexual connotations, the priests use the threat of eternal damnation to persuade the villagers to abandon their cultural practices and convert to Christian moral

behaviour.[3] The game may be a basic example, but Cohen sees the missionaries' interdiction on this behaviour as part of the conversion process that led to the catastrophic break of the Mohawks' unity with nature:

> As those waxy digits were withdrawn a wall of silence was thrown up between the forest and the hearth, and the old people gathered at the priest's hem shivered with a new kind of loneliness. They could not hear the raspberries breaking into domes, they could not smell the numberless pine needles combing out the wind, they could not remember the last moment of a trout as it lived between a flat white pebble on the streaked bed of a stream and the fast shadow of a bear claw. (87)

The break from their traditional practices and the subsequent move into a new religious system put up an ethical barrier between them and the natural world, affecting their consolatory beliefs and concepts of the afterlife.

As this break from nature destabilized their society and eventually their very existence, Cohen accordingly develops an agricultural metaphor of the natural cycle of death and rebirth. Cohen depicts an elder, Catherine's uncle, embracing the sense

3 Kim Anderson explains: "The sexual mores that came with colonization and the introduction to Christianity changed sexual behaviours of both Native women and Native men. Missionaries were horrified by Native attitudes towards sexuality. They remarked, in particular, on the sexual conduct of the women. The seventeenth-century Jesuit superior Lalemant was shocked that sexual encounters were initiated by women or men, and expressed disgust at the 'libertinage at which the girls and women abandon themselves.' The patriarchal/Christian attitudes dictated that a woman's expression of sexuality be more shame-based than a man's, a social stigma that was notably absent in many Native societies" (85). She further explains that "Native individual self-expression and self-esteem were nourished by sexual freedom and acceptance, which contributed to women's spiritual power and celebration of the body" (88).

of an immanent spirit in nature when he hears the villagers singing the "Corn-Planting Song": "He could feel the powers of the seeds, their longing to be covered with earth and explode. They seemed to force his fingers open. He tipped his hand like a cup and one kernel dropped into a hold" (90). However, whereas traditional laments use agricultural tropes as a form of consolation with the promise of the return of the spirit, Catherine's uncle's lament faces the prospect that an Aboriginal connection with nature has been destroyed and that the cycle will not renew after death:

> Uncle sank to his knees, exhausted. *There would be no harvest!* But he was not thinking of the kernels he had just sown, he was thinking about the life of his people. All the years, all the hunts, all the wars — it would all come to nothing. *There would be no harvest!* Even his soul when it ripened would not be gathered to the warm southwest, whence blows the wind which brings sunny days and the bursting corn. *The world was unfinished!* A deep pain seized his chest. The great wrestling match between Ioskeha, the White one, and Tawiscara, the Dark one, the eternal fight would fizzle out like two passionate lovers falling asleep in a tight embrace. *There would be no harvest!* (93; emphasis in the original)

Ultimately, Catherine's uncle fears that his people are losing their means of subsistence and that his people will perish from both physical and spiritual starvation. Hence, through Catherine's uncle, Cohen's depiction of Christian conversion foresees the death of the Aboriginal world. Again associating assimilation and genocide, Cohen has F. eventually describe the "wintry village" as "a Nazi medical experiment" (209), an anachronistic reference that nonetheless reinforces the narrator's recognition of the colonial holocaust.

Catherine's uncle fears the loss of his village "as more of his brethren [leave] for the new missions" (93). Indeed, responding

to Catherine's desire to be baptized, her uncle laments the loss of his culture's spiritual traditions: "Our heaven is dying. From every hill, a spirit cries out in pain, for it is being forgotten" (94). Cohen further dramatizes the ethical problems of Christian conversion in a clash of consolatory beliefs, as Catherine's uncle rejects the baptismal rites: "Do not let any of your water fall on me. I have seen many die after you have touched them with your water" (119). The priest attempts to appease Catherine's uncle by replying that "they are in Heaven now" (119), invoking the consolation that the "mystic drop" "can snatch you from an eternity of woe" (119). However, Catherine's uncle questions whether the Christian afterlife can accommodate his culture's beliefs: "Do they hunt in Heaven, or make war, or get to feasts?" (119). When Catherine's uncle learns that the Christian afterlife excludes these activities, he further refuses such a destination: "I will not go. It is not good to be lazy" (119). Uncle further questions the priest's logic: "Why did you baptize our enemy the Huron? He will get to Heaven before us and drive us out when we come" (119). The priest responds with the notion of God's infinity: "There is room for all in Heaven" (119). But Catherine's uncle questions their motives: "If there is so much room, Black-Robe, why do you guard the entrance so jealously?" (119). The priest cannot withstand Catherine's uncle's scrutiny and reiterates the threat of damnation: "Your eloquence is diabolic. Fire waits for you, old man" (120). The fatal irony of the priest's attempts at conversion and the resolve of Catherine's uncle's resistance are taken to an extreme degree later in the novel, when F. recounts the torture of Jean de Brébeuf (who was later canonized as the patron saint of Canada) and Gabriel Lalemant by the Haudenosaunee — the Iroquois, or those whom the French colonizers called the *hiro-koué:* "We baptize you, they laughed, that you may be happy in heaven. You told us that the more one suffers on earth, the happier he is in heaven" (184). By depicting these

baptismal conflicts, Cohen reveals a rhetorical weakness in the Christian consolation of heavenly transcendence that Aboriginal logic mercilessly deconstructs.

With his critique of the baptismal rites, Catherine's uncle neutralizes the priest's threat of the "infernal fire and torturing demons" (119) and steadfastly clings to the forms of consolation in his own tradition: "Yes, Black-Robe, a small shadowy fire, about which sit the shades of my relatives and ancestors" (119–20). Catherine's uncle invokes Oscotarach, a monster at the end of the world who lives in a hut beside a river where he is able to reach down and remove the brain of the deceased. Significantly, Catherine's uncle rejects the priest's transmogrification of a Spirit-being from his culture's afterlife into a Christian demon. From his perspective, Oscotarach is not a figure of damnation but an essential part of his culture's eschatological and consolatory beliefs. Catherine's uncle thus takes consolation in Oscotarach on his deathbed:

> When the wind is no longer in my nostrils my spirit body will begin a long journey homeward. Look at this wrinkled, scarred body as I speak to you. My beautiful spirit body will begin a hard, dangerous journey. Many do not complete the journey, but I will. I will cross a treacherous river standing on a log. Wild rapids will try to throw me against sharp rocks. A huge dog will bite my heels. Then I will follow a narrow path between dancing boulders which crash together, and many will be crushed, but I will dance with the boulders. Look at this old Mohawk body as I speak to you, Catherine. Beside the path there is a bark hut. In the hut lives Oscotarach, the Head-Piercer. I will stand beneath him and he will remove the brain from my skull. This he does to all the skulls which pass by. It is the necessary preparation for the Eternal Hunt. (121)

F. later recalls the figure, also in an attempt to find consolation while on his deathbed:

> I remember a story you once told me, old comrade, of how the Indians looked at death. The Indians believed that after physical death the spirit made a long journey heavenward. It was a hard, dangerous journey, and many did not complete it. A treacherous river had to be crossed on a log which bounced through wild rapids. A huge howling dog harassed the traveler. There was a narrow path between dancing boulders which crashed together, pulverizing the pilgrim who could not dance with them. The Hurons believed that there was a bark hut beside this path. Here lived Oscotarach, meaning the Head-Piercer. It was his function to remove the brains from the skulls of all who went by, "as a necessary preparation for immortality." (195–96)

Whereas the Christian afterlife is an ethical place of heaven, hell, or purgatory, in this particular Aboriginal afterlife, confronting the "demon" does not mean that the deceased is damned. In the Christian consolation, the soul becomes separate from the earth and is eventually reified in heaven or hell. For Catherine's uncle, however, the afterlife is a place where Oscotarach makes the "necessary preparation for immortality," so that the deceased can move on further to the Great Spirit. And as the Great Spirit runs throughout all things, in a certain sense, the soul also continues to dwell in the natural world. Hence, this afterlife is not an ethical place of transcendent permanence, but a transitional return to an immanent presence throughout nature.

However, a problem with this eschatology is that, from a Western point of view, an immanent and non-ethical consolatory system risks sanctioning and redeeming all forms of behaviour, not only in nature but in society. From the perspective of the novel's logic, the intolerable scandal of such consolatory visions of the afterlife is that an extremely evil person like Hitler can be taken down the river, have his totalitarian ego removed, and be passed on to the Great Spirit along with Saint Teresa. Although this analogy is anachronistic, Cohen's treatment of these issues makes clear that such an eschatological system could not

have been accepted by the seventeenth-century missionaries. Oscotarach subverts and nullifies the Christian consolation, as all souls, good and evil, are processed in this way. This point becomes pivotal later in the novel, when Cohen depicts an attempt to forgive a Hitler-figure in the Argentine hotel room scene. As horrific as it is, Cohen uses this extreme example to emphasize the idea of making an impossible act of redemption, a divine and infinite act of love — an act only a saint is capable of making. Indeed, it is not without irony that Catherine, who was considered to be a saint by the local missionaries, transcends the desire for revenge for the destruction of her people's societies when Cohen shows her to console her uncle in his hatred of the missionaries and their assimilation of Aboriginal cultures: "Try to forgive them, Father Tekakwitha" (95).

Catherine Tekakwitha, whose name means "she who, advancing, arranges the shadows neatly" (47), is the "Iroquois Virgin" (3). Representing what Peter Wilkins calls "the ultimate Canadian victim" (25), she endures the ravages of diseases carried over by the colonists. Cohen's narrator imagines her: "look at you, Catherine Tekakwitha, your face half-eaten, unable to go outside in the sun because of the damage to your eyes" (37). Catherine also endures abuse from her aunts for converting to Christianity (121).[4] She further inflicts self-abuse in her

4 Christian conversion is a long-standing theme in Canadian literature. Mary Lu MacDonald cites other examples that are similar to Catherine's case: for Indian "heroines white religion is a consolation for their noble rejection of white suitors. Although Christianity was to become an important literary indication of an Indian's worth in later years, in this period there was still too much emphasis on a pre-civilization harmony with nature for the Christian idea to dominate literary attitudes. The Christian theme is found most often in the negative sense that Indian brutality is ascribed to pagan beliefs" (242). She goes on to point out that "Christianity is also a factor in 'Françoise Brunon,' where the heroine, a converted Indian girl, is burned to death by her own people when she will not renounce her new faith (C.-W. Dupont, in *Le Castor*, Feb. 6–20, 1844)" (243).

excessive bouts of penitence and self-flagellation. However, because she forsakes her Mohawk traditions, she is considered a saint by the Jesuit missionaries, partly for her conversion, partly for the suffering she endures, and also for the miracles that occur after her death.[5] When her skin turns white post mortem and when people become healed after visiting her grave, the Jesuits interpret it as a sign from God: "Dieu favorisait les sauvages pour leur faire goûter la foi" (224) — in other words, God favoured the Indians so they could experience faith. Catherine's sanctity continues throughout Québécois folk traditions and today she provides a mythos for Canadian history and identity.

Catherine is a saint because she embodies and transcends all of the vicissitudes of Canadian history. Her conversion represents the cancellation of one history for another, of one culture for another, and of one consolatory system for another. From this perspective, Dennis Lee interprets Catherine's conversion as the central event marking the "fall" from an Aboriginal "unified being" with nature into Canadian history (64).[6] Catherine's conversion represents "the first time that nature and consciousness had been separated in the New World" (65). Gods are born from virgins, but in this New World Catherine's conversion marks the death of the Aboriginal spirits and the assimilation of Native life into the theological system of an already fallen world. Hence, while Catherine's sainthood represents

5 See Fr. Pierre Cholenec, S.J., Catherine's spiritual advisor and biographer, for details on the miracles surrounding her life and death.

6 Of course, Catherine was not the first convert. There were others before her, as the narrator himself acknowledges: "Shouldn't I be chasing someone earlier than you?" (37). She is, though, what Wilkens calls "the first colonial subject of significance to Canadian history" — in this sense, she is the first "Canadian" (30). See Daniel Sargent for details on the Algonquin Christian lineage of Catherine's mother.

the transcendence toward Christian ideals, for Aboriginal history she initiates the fall from an innocent though carnal unity with nature.

Catherine's double-edged fall creates an ironic anti-type of the biblical figure of Eve.[7] Cohen subverts Genesis symbolism, since the subjugation of the female to fertility is a result of biblical logic: if Eve had denied the temptation of the serpent, there would have been no fall from paradise into history; Catherine, in contrast, marks a fall because she denied the flesh, resulting in the loss of oneness with natural desires.[8] Hence, from a Western perspective she is a saint because she is the first notable Christian convert, an event that promises the redemption of an entire race. However, this conversion also represents the assimilation of Aboriginal life into an already fallen world based on sin and shame — the world of the same colonial system that brought

7 As Linda Hutcheon explains, biblical inversions run throughout the novel: "Faith is replaced by magic. The continuous creation — the 'begats' — loses out to an entire cast of orphans. The Bride and Bridegroom, presented traditionally in Kateri and Christ, are parodied in Edith and the Danish Vibrator (the D.V.!). . . . In the novel the apocalyptic imagery of the Eucharist becomes real cannibalism, among other things, in a demonic tale of torture and mutilation. The redemptive sacrifice of the body and blood, the bread and wine, is presented in Catherine, the 'lily out of the soil watered by the Gardener with blood of martyrs'" (43–44). See Hutcheon for further ironic biblical allusions: the French dinner party where Catherine spills her wine "perhaps refer[s] to Revelation 6:12 where the full moon becomes like blood" (44). And for the "final scenes of the novel," see Revelation 22:14, 1:7, and 1:14 (44).

8 As Anderson explains, "Missionaries pushed the idea that everything to do with Native spirituality was evil, and specifically that women were evil. What had been traditional sources of power were converted to danger, and then turned inward to destroy the cultures. . . . By using Eve to create an image of woman as evil, and by calling upon the image of a passive and domesticated Mary, the missionaries were able to accomplish their goal of wresting traditional power from Indigenous women" (77).

pestilence, disease, alienation, and nihilism into the Aboriginal world. Hence, unlike the missionaries and Indian agents, like Scott, who assumed that Aboriginal peoples had everything to gain from assimilation, for Cohen the devastation they endured underlies the conflicts that have ensued in Canadian society since the displacement of Aboriginal cultures.

THE EMPTY SYSTEM AND THE LOSS OF THE CHRISTIAN CONSOLATION

In addition to the assimilation of Aboriginal cultures into an already fallen system, Christian theology and eschatology were being destabilized by intellectual and scientific pressures of secular traditions.[9] The Christian consolatory beliefs that were once so certain lose their effectiveness in the modern period, with the development and popularity of scientific-rationalist theories that reduce traditional metaphysics to a mechanized system, empty of divine reference. Cohen signals this destruction of Western metaphysics with his passing reference to Pierre-Simon Laplace's *Exposition du système du monde* (89). As Laplace told Napoleon, when asked about the place of the Creator in his system, "Je n'avais pas besoin de cette hypothèse-la" — in other words, God is not necessary for the system of the world to function.[10] With the quantification of nature and human behaviour in the modern era, identity potentially becomes defined within a mechanized system that lacks

9 See Jahan Ramazani for an analysis of the loss of the effectiveness of traditional tropes of consolation in modern literature.

10 This famous incident may be apocryphal hearsay, as it is difficult to find an original source for it, and the many books in which it occurs do not offer a citation. In any case, I accept the anecdote as common lore, because of the profound and problematic point it makes about modern science and society.

a spiritual essence, where even the random variations of free will become predictable deviations, reinforcing the possibility that ontological truth is not divine or natural but is just another structure of human making.

Hence, where we saw an Aboriginal unity with nature broken by the intrusion of Christian systems of morality and belief, the Christian system became broken by systems of science and technology. F. laments this modern human condition to the narrator: at "times I felt depleted: you with all that torment, me with nothing but a System" (162). The narrator likewise feels trapped in a closed system, without any transcendent reference on which to base his identity or find consolation for the loss of his friends: "What's it like outside? Is there an outside?" (42). In other words, is there a transcendent meaning beyond the system? These questions inevitably lead the narrator to doubt divine essence and God's presence: "Does God love the world? What a monstrous system of nourishment!" (42). Recalling the anachronistic Nazi imagery of the early Mohawk village, F. reveals that traditional belief systems have become more primal, totalitarian, and nihilistic in the modern world, though they have always been so: "All of us animal tribes at eternal war! What have we won? Humans, the dietary Nazis! Death at the center of nourishment!" (42). A consolatory concept of God is no longer at the centre of the narrator's and F.'s experiences; the terrifying spectre of death remains at the centre with only pain on the outside: "O Death, we are your Court Angels, hospitals are your Church! My friends have died. People I know have died. O Death, why do you make Halloween out of every night? I am scared. . . . O Death, why do you do so much acting and so little talking? . . . Has Death anything to do with Pain, or is Pain working on the other side?" (90).

Cohen paints a bleak picture of modern alienation with the reduction of metaphysics to a material system, as he fears that the unifying force of religion to ground the communities of the Canadian past has dissipated and that an Aboriginal spiritual presence has disappeared from history. Cohen laments that the nation and the individual have broken their spiritual connection with nature, seeing it as hostile, indifferent, and lacking either an immanent spiritual presence or a transcendent unity. Thus, in order to recover the human body and spirit and find a form of consolation in the modern world, F. instructs the narrator to "abandon all systems" (41) and "connect nothing" (17). In one of the novel's many ironic scenes, the narrator contemplates F.'s advice while sitting on the toilet, struggling to have a bowel movement, or make himself "empty" (41):

> The straining man perched on a circle prepares to abandon all systems. . . . Yes, yes, I abandon even the system of renunciation. . . . Please make me empty, if I'm empty then I can receive, if I can receive it means it comes from somewhere outside of me, if it comes from outside of me I'm not alone! I cannot bear this loneliness. Above all it is loneliness. I don't want to be a star, merely dying. Please let me be hungry, then I am not the dead center, . . . oh, I want to be fascinated by phenomena! I don't want to live inside! Renew my life. How can I exist as the vessel of yesterday's slaughter? (41)

The irony mixes the profane and profound, as the narrator's constipation also suggests a spiritual blockage; he needs to make himself physically empty in order to be spiritually receptive, but the "ordinary eternal machinery" (35) of his body will not function properly. He is left filled with essentially the same "finite shit" (46) that Catherine daily carried from the village to the river, for which she developed a "hatred" (46) and ultimately transcended for the "eternal machinery of the

sky" (224). Furthering the irony of the narrator's condition, in this context, F.'s advice to "abandon all systems" becomes complicated, since the narrator must "abandon" Western systems in addition to "yesterday's slaughter" — the meat he has ingested but cannot process, or his tendency to identify with the historical loss of the victims he has been studying and digesting into fiction.

In its profound sense, the narrator's condition is problematic because it exposes certain contradictions not only in the English-Canadian colonial tradition but in modern traditions. Cohen responds to nihilistic and totalitarian systems by attempting to restore a vision of Aboriginal spiritual immanence; however, he must do so while also abandoning the nineteenth-century Romantic treatment of the Indian victim — the attempt to identify the English-Canadian Self with the Aboriginal Other.

THE FOUNDATIONLESS SELF AND THE ROMANTIC INDIAN VICTIM

In addition to the loss of his wife and friend, the unnamed narrator's loss of a personal and cultural identity forms the self-elegiac core of the novel. As discussed, Canadian history recounts a series of displacements among Aboriginal, French, English, as well as American cultures. These conquests have led to a repeating pattern of loss in which one culture dominates and is dominated in turn, as F. says: "The English did to us what we did to the Indians, and the Americans did to the English what the English did to us" (199). The problem for English Canadians is that they have come to be defined negatively: not British, not French, not Indian, and not American. Hence, the narrator, representative of the English Canadian, lacks a

definitive, positive identity.[11] To further reinforce this lack of identity, Cohen makes his narrator an orphan — a universal representative of the foundationless Self. In fact, all the characters are orphans, underscoring the individual's loss of connection to a shared tradition or a national history, and this affects the search for consolation at a critical point in the novel: "that blind realm, so like sleep, so like death, that journey of pleasure beyond pleasure, where each man travels as an orphan toward an atomic ancestry, more anonymous, more nourishing than the arms of blood or foster family" (184).

To compensate for the lack in his own identity, the narrator tries to identify with Catherine Tekakwitha: "I have come to rescue you from the Jesuits" (5). Specifically, the narrator covets Catherine's suffering and inspiration: "O sky, let me be sick Indian. World, let me be dreaming Mohawk" (135). The narrator realizes that it was Catherine's sickness and her spiritual desire to become Christian that created the conditions that allowed her to maintain the sanctity of her body. However, while the narrator may appear noble in his attempt to identify with the

11 Actually, the narrator's identity is more ambiguous, as it is unclear whether he is Jewish or whether he is even English. As Frank Davey points out, to summarize, although *Beautiful Losers* is undoubtedly an English-language novel, its major characters would not have been native English speakers, and in fact it is likely that no part of the novel would have taken place in English. Catherine would have spoken Mohawk and French; Edith grew up in a French-speaking mining town; F., as a Québécois politician, would have spoken French, especially at the separatist rally, and his long letter to the narrator would most likely have been written in French; finally, the narrator may write his history-work in English, but he grew up with F. in a French-Catholic orphanage and would presumably have spoken French in his formative years. Such consideration, of course, makes moot the interpretation of the narrator as representative of the English Canadian (especially in the context of the author's Jewish background) — unless one takes this ambiguity as a greater reinforcing of the theme of the English Canadian's lack of a positive identity.

Other's victimization, he becomes so focused on the past that it completely dominates the present to the extent that he loses connection with any real relationship in his life, including the past cultures and people he is studying. To leave no doubt about the ethical consequences of the narrator's Romantic identification with the Indian victim, Cohen creates an extreme self-destructive reaction through Edith's suicide. Edith is a modern descendant of the A — s and parallels the narrator's controlling identification with Catherine: "I want her to love me in *my* way" (26). However, Edith feels that the only way to "teach" the narrator a "lesson" (7) and make him recognize the problem of his identification with the Indian victim is by orchestrating a situation whereby the narrator will unintentionally cause her death, as she sits at the bottom of their apartment's elevator shaft waiting for him to use it when he returns home from the library. Tragically, Edith becomes a woman from an erased tribe who erases herself, but her suicide emphasizes the problem of turning real historical victims into "fictional victims" (7). As Wilkins argues, although the narrator is not the one who kills Edith with the elevator, the complicated motives and symbolism of his wife's suicide force "the historian to evaluate the differences between fictional victims and real ones" (29).

The narrator's approach to transcendence fails because, although he attempts to identify with the Other, he has in fact lost touch with the Other — in this case, his closest living loved ones in Edith and F., as well as the farthest historical stranger in Catherine. To crystallize the ethical problems and the impossibility of the narrator's attempt at a consolatory identification, F. gives him the obscene advice to "Fuck a saint" (12). A saint embodies innocence and an ideal purity of the divine in the human being; a saint achieves a "remote human possibility" (101). In one sense, the notion is to satisfy spiritual yearning through sexual desire, or at least to recognize that the spiritual

includes the sexual — something Christianity repressed. However, to "fuck a saint" also risks penetrating the mystery and physically dominating it, as opposed to spiritually communing with it.[12] Thus, the instinctual notion of such an act exposes the problem that the Romantic idealization of the Indian victim, Catherine, is also an attempt to possess her.[13] However, the narrator's attempt to fully absorb her identity ultimately fails, because a saint represents some core part of humanity that is "impossible" (37) to corrupt.

Wilkins sees irony in this failure, as it provides the narrator's "saving grace" (34), or the possibility of redeeming him from the failed systems by further teaching him to find an alternative way of identification and consolation. However,

12 Stressing the explicit sexuality in colonial narratives is not unique to Cohen. Allan Greer points out in François-René de Chateaubriand's *Les Natchez:* "a central theme was love and sex in the natural world of America, with the encounter of European civilization and savage North America providing [narrative] tension. . . . Though Tekakwitha herself is not sexualized in *Les Natchez,* she is placed in the midst of a highly eroticized story of colonial desire. . . . Almost from the beginning of American colonization, stories of love — invariably ill-fated — between a native woman and a man from Europe form a staple of the literature of travel and encounter. . . . America and its indigenous inhabitants represent heightened passion and an authenticity that was felt to be lacking in Europe. . . . Eroticism supplies the main vehicle for the exploration of human relations, while race and nationality serve as fundamental lines of division" (190–92).

13 Anderson interprets this kind of situation in symbolic terms of consuming the Other: "People with a desire for 'eating the Other' do not see themselves operating within a racist framework; rather, they think they are progressive in their desire to make contact. . . . People need to believe that their desire to befriend an Indian or to sleep with a woman of colour is proof that we have all transcended the racism that plagues the Americas, and that in so doing we are tucking our racism safely in the past. But what is implied in this type of contact? What narratives are we replaying? . . . These attitudes reinforce colonial power relations, where the dark, earthly and sensual paradise is there for the enjoyment of the white colonizer" (107).

Wilkins does not consider the larger problem, namely, that the narrator must now find an alternative to the alternative: the attempt to identify with the past Aboriginal, which the narrator must now abandon, is the alternative to the breakdown of the Western systems that he has already abandoned. This point is often overlooked. For example, although Douglas Barbour and Stephen Scobie point out the paradox in the novel of systematically "abandon[ing] all systems," they quickly attribute the unresolved paradox to the novel's thematic mode of "hysteria" (Scobie 96), as a way of breaking the closed rational systems, but do not put the paradox in context with the broader contradictions in the English-Canadian colonial tradition — that is, Cohen's depiction of the narrator's failure to master Catherine marks the end of the Romantic attempt to assimilate the Aboriginal Other in English-Canadian literature.

Thus, rather than assimilate the Indian maiden into the colonial gaze, as Scott attempts, Cohen recognizes the problem of framing her for his narrator's own elegiac identification. The conditions of the death of the narrator's wife, who parallels Catherine, force the narrator to re-evaluate his assimilation of Native loss and his lugubrious identification with the Indian victim. By the end, Cohen affirms the elegiac principle that the loss can never be properly restored. The narrator must respond to loss in a way that recognizes the Other beyond the Self.

THE TRANSCENDENTAL VISION AND THE APOCALYPTIC GESTURE

To further illustrate the failure of identifying with the past victim, Cohen addresses the failure of transcendental ideals and apocalyptic notions. Although F.'s lesson for the narrator reveals the impossibility of penetrating the ideal of the Indian victim or the saint as a form of consolation, F. is also a contradictory

figure, as he transgresses his own teachings in his attempts to master and become the ideal himself through his own transcendental projection of his personal vision onto the world.[14] F. tries to construct a perfect body for himself by emulating Charles Axis (77). F. also attempts to construct a perfect body for Edith (175), in addition to attempting to dominate the past Indian victims, by sexually mastering the four remaining female descendants of the A — s (5). As if this were not enough, F. tries to deify himself as an Aboriginal godhead: "Ask yourself. Was I your Oscotarach? I pray that I was" (196; emphasis in the original). Indeed, it is here that Cohen crystallizes the problem with this kind of Romantic identification, for if F. becomes Oscotarach and embodies the Aboriginal, then he nullifies its function, as he cannot "perform the operation" (196) of removing his own brain (ego). This is F.'s central problem in facing the modern human condition: "When you understand this question [of how to operate on the Self], you will understand my ordeal" (196).

Ultimately, F. attempts to reconfigure the world according to his personal vision: with his modern interpretation of the chaos and nihilism throughout history, F. becomes entangled in a vast "car accident" where he attempts to "stitch" the "strewn" body parts of the "wrecked world" back together in the shape of the transcendental projection of his personal vision (186–87). However, as he realizes that he has been creating "monstrous mistakes" rather than achieving an "ideal physique," he sees that he has been sewing himself into his "own grotesque creations" (187). He realizes that his apocalyptic fantasy is not part of a larger reality, revealing the problem of constructing the world and the end of history in one's own image as a form of consolation — something not even a saint accomplishes:

14 See Wilkins for further analysis on how, in aspiring to the ideal, F. becomes the oppressor — or rather, the ideal becomes the oppressor — and how this works with the French and English political dynamic of the novel.

"There is something arrogant and warlike in the notion of a man setting the universe in order. It is a kind of balance that is his glory" (101).[15] Hence, while Scott attempted to legitimate the colonizer's role in the loss of Aboriginal cultures, Cohen shows how the apocalyptic gesture cannot be used to legitimate the course of a nation's history, and that in the modern period it has become a device of the totalitarian ego, or at the very least the subjective projections of isolated individuals.

To underline the problem of the transcendental vision and the apocalyptic gesture as forms of self-consolation, Cohen uses both fact and lore. The narrator first analyzes the definition and etymology of "apocalypse": the word means "revelation" and "derives from the Greek apokaluptein, meaning uncover or disclose" (104). However, the narrator breaks the word down further to its root forms: "Apo is a Greek prefix meaning from, derived from. Kaluptein means to cover. This is cognate with kalube which is cabin, and kalumma which means woman's veil. Therefore, apocalyptic describes that which is revealed when the woman's veil is lifted" (104–5). For the narrator, this more ancient meaning of the word expresses his need to explore under Catherine's veil or "blanket" (105). Specifically, the narrator seeks to understand an apocalyptic moment in Canadian history that Catherine is said to have initiated. Edith recounts a story not found in the accounts of "any of the standard biographers" (105), in which Catherine accidentally spills a glass of wine at a banquet held by the French colonizers shortly after her baptism. As Wilkins argues, "The contaminating stain turns the white world red in an ironic inversion of Catherine's becoming white;

15 In Kenneth Bruffee's theory of elegiac romance, "each elegiac romance examines from its own distinct point of view its narrator's strenuous attempt, in most cases a mostly successful attempt, to overcome the tendency to hero-worship. Elegiac romance is the drama of an obsessive hero-*maker* struggling to become his own person" (56; emphasis in the original).

it marks an unconscious interruption in her conversion, the originary, indelible stain that conversion introduces to Canada as a European colony" (31). Recalling the blood-stained lips of the Onondaga Madonna, we see that whereas Scott saw assimilation as inevitable and the rebel stain as tragic because her culture was doomed to disappear, Catherine, as Wilkins argues, "has left a residue of her Iroquois heritage that no conversion can obliterate" (31). With this apocryphal story, Cohen does not merely repeat the patterns of the past, as the lesson of the novel itself is to avoid the contradictions that we see in poems such as Scott's. Furthermore, Cohen's apocalyptic moment is a far cry from visions of the end of the world used to legitimate the control over the course of Western history. Indeed, the narrator even deflates the apocalyptic ramifications of Catherine's clumsy act: "revolutions do not happen on buffet tables" (21). Nonetheless, for Cohen, the apocalypse is not in the future; it has already happened in the past, and not in the traditional sense, as it provides the consolation for the loss of Aboriginal cultures that a residual still survives and remains uncolonized.

As the effectiveness of the traditional apocalyptic vision fades, Cohen turns to a general sense of the body, open to all consolatory belief systems, including Christian and Aboriginal forms of transcendence and immanence. Ironically, the failure to "fuck a saint," enter Catherine's "cabin," or lift her "blanket" provides the narrator with his salvation, leaving him "disarmed and empty, an instrument of Grace" (163). F. also becomes broken and repentant: "nothing I did was pure enough" (173); "but we are merely once upon a time" (225). The body redeems the spirit, and both the narrator and F. turn to prayer for consolation.[16]

16 As Wilkins explains, "Whereas fucking implies mastery through the domination and annihilation of its object, prayer is an act of humility and supplication that preserves an essential distance between the desiring subject and the object of desire, allowing the other to remain other" (34).

The narrator expresses his prayer primarily in the three capitalized passages throughout Book One (57, 66, and 95), which are addressed to a general principle of God, and not restricted to the Christian one. F.'s central prayer, however, privileges the Aboriginal ritual of the "cure" that Catherine's uncle "dreamed" (136) — a ritual "called Andacwandet by the Hurons" (140). In its physical terms, the Andacwandet is a communal sexual event inside the "cabin" where "each fuck was the same and each fuck was different" (138).[17] In its spiritual terms, the cure leads Catherine's uncle to the revelation of "the first prayer in which Manitou had manifest himself, the greatest and truest sacred formula": "I change / I am the same / I change / I am the same" (139), repeated to infinity.

The Andacwandet offers a curative chant that embodies both the immanent and the transcendent principles of the spirit. Simultaneously embodying transience and permanence, the chant conveys the transformation of the spirit and the death of each temporary incarnation in harmony with the constancy of a metaphysical presence that transcends the mutating fluctuations of nature. The chant integrates all forms of being but does not remain a frozen unity or fixed ideal, because every attainment of the absolute immediately and seamlessly transforms into what it is not — the one becomes the other. The pattern of this paradox becomes clear as Catherine's uncle repeats the mantra over and over: "He did not miss a syllable and he loved the words he sang because as he sang each sound he saw it change and every change was a return and every return was a change" (139). Thus, the Andacwandet is more than

17 Margaret Leahey cites Gabriel Sagard, who observed a "ceremony that involved young men and women having sexual relations in the presence of a sick woman, 'either at her request, according to an imagination or dream she may have had, or by order of the Oki [powerful spirits] for her health and recovery'" (111).

bodily sexuality — it is a transcendental ecstasy that unifies transcendence and immanence, reflecting an entire process of identity, for each manifestation falls away as it comes into being until there is nothing but pure unnamable revelation:

> It was a dance of masks and every mask was perfect because every mask was a real face and every face was a real mask so there was no mask and there was no face for there was but one dance in which there was but one mask but one true face which was the same and which was a thing without a name which changed and changed into itself over and over. (140)

The revelation of the "one true face" opens the realm of the supernatural and makes it possible for Catherine's uncle to recover from his sickness.[18] However, although the prayer restores a precolonial sexual and spiritual unity with nature, the narrator and F. still face the new consolatory conundrum: they must "abandon all systems," including the Aboriginal rituals, in order to avoid the Romantic treatment of them — a problem the resolution of which we will now address.

18 Margaret Leahey explains that the Huron "had a long tradition of rituals associated with curing sickness. Le Mercier writes that when the village of Ossossané was particularly hard hit by disease, a shaman, Tonneraouanont (whom he describes as a 'little hunchback, extremely misshapen'), 'began to sing, and the others sang after him.' . . . On another occasion, Le Mercier writes, the Hurons 'donned their masks and danced, to drive away the disease.' . . . Le Mercier adds that 'at the end of the dance, at the command of the sorcerer *Tsondacoune* all these masks were hung at the end of poles and placed over every cabin . . . to frighten the malady'" (110–11). Leahey further cites an account by Brébeuf: "Some of those participating in the ceremony were 'naked as the hand, with bodies whitened, and faces black as Devils, and feathers or horns on the heads; others were smeared with red, black, and white . . . each adorned himself as extravagantly as he could, to dance this Ballet, and contribute something to the health of the sick man'" (111).

THE RETURN OF MAGIC

As Cohen can no longer turn to the Western apocalyptic gesture as a device to avoid the narrator's predicament, he turns to a principle of magic. This is a critical point, because early in the novel the narrator laments the disenchantment of nature and everyday life as part of the mechanization of society and closure of traditional metaphysics. The narrator points out that with her conversion, Catherine abandoned "the old magic" (54). The narrator also acknowledges this absence of mystery in his own life: "Lost ordinary magic! . . . I am not enjoying sunsets" (41). However, F. redeems magic in a modern rendition of the Andacwandet consolatory formula, generating a simultaneous repetition and alteration of being: "God is alive. Magic is afoot. God is afoot. Magic is alive. Alive is afoot. Magic never died" (167), and so on. This modern form recognizes the mundane things in life as enchanted with a sense of the eternal. Thus, abandoning all systems need not lead to a moribund condition of existential alienation and nothingness; rather, abandoning all systems and turning to a concept of magic can lead to all possibilities and even the impossibilities — "All Chances At Once!" (258).

However, Cohen's turn to "magic" may seem an absurd and superstitious solution to the scientific-rationalist destruction of religion and metaphysics. Like the recourse to apocalyptic visions, turning to magic may be a facile response to the complex problems posed by the modern world. But Cohen has shown that all systems have failed to provide consolation. Magic reveals how the transcendental centre of a system is an illusion and therefore that all systems are flawed or broken. Nonetheless, with the concept of magic, Cohen embraces the centre as an illusion and continues as if it were real. In this way, too, he reinvigorates the Western system. Magic is still an

immanent principle of transformation driven by both positive and negative forces — "Magic never died." Indeed, the central redemptive lesson of the novel is "do not be a magician, be magic" (175).

A universal concept of magic also helps Cohen move beyond the conflict of Christian and Aboriginal traditions with the appearance of Isis, an ancient Mediterranean fertility goddess and archetypal consolatory figure. This figure stands outside of Canadian history and therefore can act as an objective, though dynamic, absolute to incorporate all of the female figures of the novel. In terms of the Christian system, Isis is the throne upon which the king sits, like Mary, upon whom the baby Christ sits,[19] or like the Onondaga Madonna and her child. Isis also wears moccasins (251), representing Kateri Tekakwitha, Catherine's precolonized identity.[20] Isis also represents Edith, or rather Edith proclaims that she is Isis (195). Finally, as an archetypal nurse-figure, Isis reflects F's nurse, Mary Voolnd. Overall, the figure of the nurse is appropriate for the novel's major consolatory movement, particularly when the narrator abandons the assimilation of Native loss and the attempt to master the Other with his consolatory request to a modern incarnation of Catherine in a pharmacy: "Please, nurse this wound" (151).

Cohen further uses Isis to redeem the mechanical elements of the novel. With the mechanization of the world, the earth

19 See Douglas Barbour for a comprehensive analysis of the Isis figure.

20 In fact, Kateri is not her Mohawk name — only Tekakwitha is. Greer explains she was given her Christian name after being "baptized at the age of nineteen in memory of Catherine of Siena. . . . 'Catherine' pronounced in French, but with a Mohawk accent, comes out as a sound that an English-speaking listener might write as 'Kateri'" (xi). "Tekakwitha" is also a misleading English rendering of the French spelling, "Tegakouita," of the Mohawk pronunciation, more accurately spelled as "Degagwitah" in English (xi).

threatens to become sterile and eviscerated, symbolized by the Danish Vibrator, or D.V. (*deo volente*), the tyrannical vibrator of God's will that returns to the sea like a leviathan during the Argentine hotel room scene. Isis restores fertility, though, in the symbolic sense of the virgin birth, which represents the divine emergence of the spirit from matter. The revelation is that spirituality comes from the flesh; it is not something separate from matter that imposes value on the human world — "The World has a Body" (57). In this sense, the principles of magic and transformation also embody the energy of the machine, as seen in F.'s recapitulation of the Telephone Dance: "I became a telephone. Edith was the electrical conversation that went through me" (35). In the end, retrofitting the old, dying *deus ex machina,* Cohen deploys the mechanical as a means of transcendence for the narrator, particularly as his composite being with F. dissolves and transforms into a movie projection in the sky of Ray Charles (258). Isis and the blind blues singer in the sky (via the machine) are figures that point beyond the Self to an ultimate mystery.

THE RESOLUTION OF THE SELF AND OTHER

The dissolution of the final character into a movie-in-the-sky is the modern mechanical form of spiritual transcendence through art, and Cohen takes this consolation to a universal perspective to reveal that there is something at the core potential of Canadian identity that projects beyond ethnicity and nationality. In this way, Cohen responds to the empty modern system by reinvigorating it with the possibility of transformation and, by extension, the possibility of healing the wound between the Self and Other. Returning to his specific historical context, Cohen uses that which was nearly destroyed in Canadian history, Aboriginal traditions and cultures, to break

the mechanized Western system and yet also to restore its ideal content, along with those Aboriginal traditions. Although he has self-consciously critiqued this gesture throughout the novel, it is precisely his use of a figure of universal magic that allows him to return to Catherine Tekakwitha and resolve the conflict between his and her cultures. Catherine symbolizes the first Christian convert and the historical transition from an Aboriginal spiritual immanence to a Christian form of transcendence. However, as we have seen, Catherine retains a sense of her Aboriginal heritage and, at the same time, embodies transcendence for the narrator in her potential canonization: "I love the Jesuits because they saw miracles" (105). Thus, although Cohen critiques the institution of religion, the reinvigoration of Aboriginal forms of spirituality also leads to the reinvigoration of Christian forms, but now without the oppressive systems traditionally attached to them. Coming full circle, by restoring and privileging the effectiveness of Aboriginal spiritual symbols and using them to modify Western metaphysical assumptions to reveal the failure of Romantic identification and apocalyptic visions, for Cohen, the Great Mystery also relegitimates the magic at the core of Christian belief.

Cohen acknowledges the loss of a stable national identity and the need to base it on a sense of shared loss, without canceling differences between each group's identities. Hence, Cohen addresses losses on a national level to establish an identity based on shared loss in a way that solicits the subject to recognize the other's point of view. However, although he exposes the problems of the Romantic treatment of the Indian victim, he then perpetuates the same gesture of turning to Aboriginal traditions to supplement the failing Western system, self-consciously repeating the problem of appropriating the spiritual views of the Aboriginal Other in order to compensate for cultural loss and support a personal metaphysics. However, to

break this self-referential circle, Cohen uses universal concepts of magic and mystery as a way out of the dilemma. In the end, or rather, from the beginning, Cohen affirms the possibility of a resolution between the Self and Other, regardless of whether it be Western or Aboriginal — as F. has always maintained, "It is all diamond" (9).

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Playing the Role of the Tribe: The Aesthetics of Appropriation in Canadian Aboriginal Hip Hop

THOR POLUKOSHKO

> So when the party's live, it shouldn't be beef
> Or playin' Indian roles, I guess you thought you was chief.
>
> DE LA SOUL, "Brakes" (from the album *Stakes Is High*)

The first track ("N-Tro") of War Party's debut album, *The Reign* (2001), begins with a sound bite taken from a news broadcast. A man's voice — identifiable as that of Peter Mansbridge — is set against a gentle hip hop beat playing in the background. Mansbridge's voice draws attention to the strong racial connotations underlying the genre of hip hop. "Most of us are familiar with the rap music that was born in the black urban streets of the United States," he intones. "But it has now been adopted

by a group of young Natives here in Canada. Rap's message is the story of a community disenfranchised, alienated, and impoverished. The story a group of young Cree knows very well." Following the hip-hop convention of boasting, War Party uses this recognition from Peter Mansbridge (recognition on the national level) as proof of their reputation — and thus their musical skills — before we even hear them rap. Of course, War Party employs the sound bite ironically and possibly even satirically, appropriating the Mansbridge recording, which derives from a predominantly white and Canadian context, as a validation for music that is sure to be highly steeped in the politics of First Nations identity and their *mis*representation by the white media. What stands out, though, is the fact that the sound bite identifies rap music as an African-American art form, with Mansbridge noting that War Party has merely "adopted" this style of black music. In this essay, I explore notions of appropriation and the performance of race in conjunction with Canadian Aboriginal hip hop.[1] In particular, I examine the racial and aesthetic implications of War Party's embrace of a presumably African-American art form when this appropriation is viewed

1 The term *hip hop* is generally considered to define an entire lifestyle, rather than just a musical form, with the four pillars of hip hop being MCing (rapping), DJing, B-boying (break-dancing), and graffiti art. (Secondary elements also include beatboxing, hip-hop fashion, and ebonics.) In this sense, then, the term *rap* refers more specifically to a facet of the music itself. With the commercialization of hip-hop culture in the late 1980s and the early 1990s, some individuals argue that music described as "rap" represents a commercialization of the culture (as represented by artists such as 50 Cent or Jay-Z), while *hip hop* is used to describe music that is more true to hip-hop culture (including the music of less mainstream artists such as Talib Kweli or Del tha Funkee Homosapien). For the purpose of this essay, I do not engage in this commercialization debate: when I use the term *rap*, I am simply referring to the musical aspect of hip hop.

alongside their considerable use of First Nations tribal imagery. I argue that the racialization of their rap music through the aestheticization of both African-American and Native identities, along with an active critique of these identities, authorizes War Party's position within the (North) American hip-hop discourse of racial marginality.

With such an intense preoccupation with race, alongside notions of historicity and "authenticity," it is only fitting that rap music turns to tribal imagery — images of the "original" culture — to highlight its racialized nature. Tribal imagery has been a significant aspect of African-American hip hop since its origins, from Afrocentric groups sporting names such as the Jungle Brothers, Brand Nubian, and A Tribe Called Quest, to collectives such as the Native Tongues Posse and Afrika Bambaataa's Zulu Nation. Likewise, photos and artwork evoking African tribalism have graced album covers such as K'naan's *The Dusty Foot Philosopher* (2005), Blackalicious's *Blazing Arrow* (2002), and A Tribe Called Quest's *Midnight Marauders* (1993) and *The Low End Theory* (1991). This tribal imagery found in African-American hip-hop culture stems from a desire to acknowledge traditional racial origins and assert claims of racial and artistic authenticity, while empowering an historically repressed African identity.

Tribal imagery has long been a facet of First Nations and Native American representation as well, as it often conforms to the conventional "understandings of Native identity" that are "couched in terms of *primordiality,* a state of existence in contradistinction to modernity," which ignores the contemporary, urban Indian in favour of the pre-colonial Indian (Lawrence 1; emphasis in the original). The imagined paradox between the contemporary and the tribal allows tribal images to fulfill the desire for primordiality, given that these images are assumed to be highly traditional in nature and thus untouched by Western civilization. For example, the image of an Indian chief dressed in

full regalia, complete with a feather headdress, tomahawk, and moccasins, loses its power as a symbol for "Indianness" as soon as the Indian chief is contemporized, now carrying a briefcase and wearing a suit. The idea of this imaginary Indian resists the notion that centuries of colonization inform modern Native culture, and as a result of this belief in the pre-colonial Indian identity, Indigenous peoples are often forced to "demonstrat[e] to white people the primordial nature of their claims to Indianness" (Lawrence 4). In other words, Natives are often forced to "play Indian" as a means to validate their own identities.

At the beginning of this essay, I quote from the De La Soul song, "Brakes." I use these lines to draw attention to the notion of playing Indian. For non-Natives, such as Archie Belaney, with his assumed identity as Grey Owl, to the cover of Biz Markie's album *Weekend Warrior,* the practice of playing Indian is highly charged with distinct political intentions and carries with it specific social and racial commentary. Likewise, the First Nations practice of playing Indian is no less politically or socially charged than the images that accompany such "play." But as Oklahoma Cherokee rapper Litefoot points out (in response to OutKast's tactless representation of Native Americans in their presentation of the hit "Hey Ya" at the 2004 Grammy Awards), it matters who takes on the role of disseminating tribal images: "I realize that African Americans are mostly disconnected from the tribal cultures of their ancestors back in Africa, but that's no excuse to come along and insult mine" (Verán et al. 288). According to Litefoot, Natives still retain the cultural rights to their tribal representations, unlike African-Americans, whom he believes have little claim to tribal imagery. He seems to make this claim along the lines of temporal and geographic connectedness — with African tribalism existing in the past, in another place, separate from the contemporary African-American identity. Litefoot is correct in taking offence at yet another portrayal of

the primordial Indian, but while he may be accurate in relation to OutKast's link to African tribalism, he commits the same blunder as the Georgian rap group by assuming that African tribalism has a fixed temporal location and that it cannot coexist alongside the contemporary African-American identity.

Temporality aside, as a commodified medium in our predominantly visual culture, music, and perhaps rap music even more so, becomes an ideal site for the proliferation of tribal imagery. As Tricia Rose notes with regard to music videos, "the visualization of music has far-reaching effects on musical cultures and popular culture generally," including "the need to craft an image to accompany one's music" (9). This construction of image via music videos is also aided by other visual mediums that accompany musical production, such as album art, websites, and even visually oriented lyrics within the songs themselves. Rose argues that rap music is highly concerned with forming images of specific identity and aims to root them "in the specific, the local experience" (34). Hence, the basic demands of a visual society coupled with rap's focus on race and locality contribute to this desire for explicitly racialized images.

Of course, I must clarify that *tribal* identification and *racial* identification are two separate modes of representation. Tribal identification is highly concerned with the specific (such as specific cultural practices, beliefs, and so forth), while racial identification assumes a flattening of difference to some degree and an effacing of cultural particularities. Thus, one racial identity (First Nations) may be home to multiple tribal identities (Cree, Cherokee, Blackfoot, and so on). Throughout my discussion I suggest that tribal images act as representations of racialization, and I often use the terms *tribal* and *racial* interchangeably, but I want to make clear that by conflating the specific with the general, I do not intend to devalue or exclude the tribal; I simply wish to point out that a large portion of War

Party's audience will be unlikely to recognize specific tribal meanings, interpreting them as racial or generically "cultural" signs, rather than as tribal signs. Thus, in my analysis of War Party's tribal imagery, I will not discuss the accuracy of their representations; instead, I will focus on the portrayal of "the Indian" in War Party's music. (By "the Indian," I refer to generic representations of the pan-Indian image recognizable to Western society.) This is not to say that War Party does not construct valid and accurate representations of the Cree Nation, but I am more concerned with how these images, regardless of how they correspond to the lived and culturally grounded experience of Cree life, are *presented* and *interpreted* as "authentic," racialized representations. Of course, in a discussion of racial aesthetics, the term *authentic* is problematic, as an "authentic aesthetic" is something of an oxymoron. Perhaps, within the context of my argument, it would be more useful to speak of the *aesthetics of authenticity*. Authenticity, in this sense, resides in signs that fulfill codes of lived cultural experience for individuals occupying space outside of this lived experience. For example, just as Eazy-E rhymes about "hos" and guns in "Boyz-n-the-Hood" to fulfill his image as an "authentic" gangsta, War Party uses their music to implement codes of authenticity for non-tribal and non–First Nations audiences. In most hip hop, the claim is not necessarily required to match the lived experience, as long as the argument is convincing enough. (For example, one does not actually need to be the "best MC" in order to make such a claim, but the rapper ought to be prepared to defend the assertion.) By focusing on the *appearance* of this authenticity, the *performance* of this authenticity, and the *constructedness* of this authenticity, we might liken notions of authenticity to notions of race — both of which are social constructs that rest on *perception*.

Considering that "hip hop is encoded with a braid of subtexts of symbolic desires and with questions of national and

individual identity" (Cornyetz 495), I would argue that War Party, as a Canadian Aboriginal rap group, plays the role of the Indian through tribal images in order to gain recognition as a marginalized racial group, which in turn justifies their inclusion in an inherently racialized genre of music. Essentially, being Indian (in other words, proving their racial marginalization) allows them to participate in the African-American culture of hip hop, while also giving them the means to question the dominant, and problematic, conceptions of what it means to be an indigenous person in Canada.

Before I discuss War Party's appropriation of African-American aesthetics and what the ramifications of playing Indian are for War Party in relation to this black aesthetic, I will give a brief reading of the First Nations tribal imagery found in their music. War Party's music video for "This Right Here" (featuring Obese Chief), a track from their most recent album, *The Resistance* (2005), provides excellent material for such an analysis. This video is appropriate for numerous reasons, including the fact that the video clearly has a higher production value than their other music videos — an indication of their moderate commercial success.[2] Because of this commercial success, we can assume that the potential audience for "This Right Here" would be much larger (and whiter) than War Party's earlier work, possibly prompting an increased pressure for them to play Indian. Unlike their previous videos, which focus mostly on images of everyday, contemporary life on the reserve, "This Right Here" is bursting with tribal imagery. Although their previous work also utilizes tribal imagery, "This Right Here" is clearly aimed at a more diverse and transcultural audience, thus becoming more relevant to my discussion of appropriation and identity politics.

2 In 2001, with the music video for "Feelin' Reserved," War Party became the first Aboriginal rap group to have a video aired nationally on MuchMusic (War Party website).

The video opens to a closeup of a Native woman's face. She is playing a flute instrument (which eventually synthesizes with a drum loop to become part of the beat), her hair is braided, she wears a thick necklace of beads, and, most prominently, she sports a mask of black paint across her eyes. The video quickly shifts to the image of a canoe filled with people, and then, before we even catch a glimpse of the rap group, it shifts to a brief image of a Native woman looking to the sky as if in prayer. (This same image is repeated later, but with a large moon in the background). As the chorus begins, the video switches between images of the rappers (Rex and Cynthia Smallboy and Obese Chief), images of women in tight-fitting and revealing dresses dancing provocatively and hanging off the male MCs,[3] and images of what appears to be a traditional ceremony, complete with costumes, masks, drums, and dancing. The video continues with similar combinations of images. Other tribal imagery includes phrases such as "we hard drummin'" and "we got beats that will blow your braids back" — there is even a quick flash of two tepees near the start of the video. Throughout the video, splatters and streaks of colour drip and smudge across the frame, drawing even more attention to the face paint worn by the individuals in the "ceremony" clips.

This is not to say that the tribal images employed by War Party are simply a commodification of pre-colonial imagery used merely to signify Indianness to a white audience. Of course, this is part of the purpose — to play Indian — but, in fact, the video is also quite effective at subverting the temporal conceptions of Indianness, in that the video self-reflexively commingles pre-colonial Native imagery with contemporary Native imagery. For example, the fast cuts back and forth between ceremonial garb

3 The treatment of women in this video, especially in relation to the objectification of women in conventional American rap videos, is an essay in itself. Of interest is also the notion of representations of the "Indian princess."

and urban clothing signify a mingling of temporally grounded images, merging the pre-colonial and the modern into one single representation of Nativeness. Even the scantily clad women arrive in the canoe at the start of the video — contemporary passengers in a boat piloted by a man from the past who wears a traditional costume. War Party's logo, which flashes in the background while Rex raps, also signifies a merging of the imaginary primordial Indian with the reality of contemporary life. The logo consists of a caricatured Indian, shirtless, with flowing braids and a tomahawk, who holds a microphone in his other hand. Most prominently, though, the chorus of the song seems to connote a melding of temporal identities:

> *Cynthia:* This right here
> *Rex:* It's like y'all cannot . . .
> *Cynthia:* This right here
> *Rex:* . . . believe it's us now.

Through the repetition of words like "right here" and "now," the chorus suggests a sense of immediacy. As Lawrence notes, within a temporally oriented system of identification, "there is no future for Native people . . . other than as 'the Vanishing Race'" (5). Perhaps, then, the "us" in the chorus, rather than referring to War Party, refers to First Nations people in general, as in: "It's like y'all cannot believe that *we,* contemporary, urban MCs, are authentic Indians." The myth of the imaginary, primordial Indian is shattered by such a realization.

Of course, despite the fact that War Party is in active conversation with the myth of the primordial Indian, if everyone who watched the video for "This Right Here" were able to recognize the racial and temporal dynamics of First Nations identity, then the myth would not exist in the first place. Thus, War Party's tribal imagery must still act as a signifier for their Indianness. In rap music, performing this racial identity has

multiple effects: playing Indian "authenticates" War Party as part of a racial minority, while also authorizing their participation in (as I will soon discuss) a thoroughly racialized genre of music. But the inclusion of tribal imagery also acts to make hip hop a valid expression within the Native community. In this case, the accurate representation of tribal imagery is more important; the images serve to bring the aesthetics of the culture, along with, and more importantly, aspects of Native culture itself to the music.

Either way, the inclusion of tribal imagery in War Party's rap functions to validate their marginalized identity and experience — as legitimate aspects of hip-hop culture, or as legitimate aspects of First Nations culture. By localizing a specific Cree racial experience through their music, War Party establishes a discourse of authenticity, where, regardless of whether listeners perceive this identity as genuinely Cree or as "genuinely" pan-Indian, the appearance of an authentic racial identity is all that War Party needs to keep rapping. As Krims notes, "The touchstone of authenticity in public representations of hip-hop culture and rap music has long been some notion of urban locality and ethnic and/or class marginality" (198). The key term in Krims's analysis is "public representation." No matter how damaging the commodification of tribal images might be (possibly reinforcing the stereotypical pan-Indian identity), for public acceptance of War Party's racial persona all that matters is aesthetics. The proliferation of tribal *imagery* attests to this.

But the question remains: to what degree, if any, does Canadian Aboriginal hip hop appropriate an African-American form of art? If the aesthetics of race and identity are key factors in producing the appearance of authenticity, then even if hip hop, as an art form, does not "belong" to African-Americans, the aesthetics of North American rap (and even world rap) continue to point to a black aesthetic. So to what degree, then,

does Canadian Aboriginal hip hop appropriate the aesthetics of African-American hip hop?

Rap music is inherently a genre of appropriation. The very essence of the music is based on borrowed ideas, images, and sounds:

> Hip hop replicates and reimagines the experiences of urban life and symbolically appropriates urban space through sampling, attitude, dance, style, and sound effects. Talk of subways, crews and posses, urban noise, economic stagnation, static and crossed signals leap out of hip hop lyrics, sounds, and themes. . . . Hip hop music and culture also relies on a variety of Afro-Caribbean and Afro-American musical, oral, visual, and dance forms and practices. (Rose 22–23)

Similarly, the aesthetics of identity in hip hop are rooted in appropriation: "Rap self-expression consists of inscribing an individual name and associated difference to an extant, borrowed expression of another. Sampling commingles the rapper's own statements with an existing discourse and produces the voice of the individual both within and without his or her immediate subgroup" (Cornyetz 495). In other words, elements of War Party's overall image undoubtedly derive from the African-American aesthetics embedded in American rap music. Krims argues that the powerful influence of American media on the Canadian music industry (both in terms of what we listen to and in terms of how Canadian artists define "success") contributes to the lack of well-known and imitable Canadian MCs (179–80). As a result, American rappers, who are mostly of African-American descent, remain the chief source of inspiration for Canadian artists. Clearly, War Party appropriates the aesthetics of these musical influences (including legendary rapper Chuck D, from Public Enemy, judging from his guest appearance on a track from *The Resistance*), as is seen in their employment of

American-style conventions such as their use of explicit lyrics, narratives of struggle, and racial imagery. The question then becomes, what are the effects of this appropriation? Are the MCs of War Party "playing black," along with playing Indian, and, if so, does this undermine their Nativeness?

In an interlude between songs on their album *The Greatest Natives from the North* (2003), War Party draws attention to the (perceived) appropriation of black cultural aesthetics when a caricatured young, white male — complete with racist attitudes and Internet blogging skills — describes the rap group as "wannabe black rappers." Along with the sound bite of Peter Mansbridge on the intro track to *The Reign,* this focus on the appropriation of racial aesthetics prompts us to consider the performativity of race. Thus, in order to determine whether War Party is, in fact, *appropriating* rap as a medium of expression, we must first briefly explore the construction of race as an aesthetic and performative category. I should note that I have no intention of reducing the discussion of race (and the discussion of hip hop) to a black-white binary, and I use the works of W.E.B. Du Bois and Frantz Fanon because they both frame racialized bodies in juxtaposition to whiteness. Although both Du Bois and Fanon reflect upon the black subject within specific historical circumstances, we can still apply the underlying ideas of their work to a study of the racialization of contemporary First Nations peoples.

When considering the performativity or aesthetics of identity, the emphasis always falls upon an "authority" that inhabits a space outside the identity in question. As Du Bois, in his seminal text *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), explains, the "double consciousness" that African-Americans experience is a "sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world [read: a *white* world] that looks on in amused contempt and pity" (2). In a

sentiment similar to Du Bois, Fanon, in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), also describes blackness as an identity that exists only within a white society: "Not only must the black man be black; he must be black in relation to the white man" (110). Fanon, like Du Bois, emphasizes the visuality of this dialectic between the black body and the rest of the world: "I am overdetermined from without. I am the slave not of the 'idea' that others have of me but of my own appearance" (116). Bringing Fanon into the present, the black hip-hop artist is black because white society sees him or her as non-white and thus defines him or her as black. Essentially, then, the rap artist's blackness exists purely because it appears as a deviation from the white "norm." Working from the ideas put forth by Du Bois and Fanon, and paraphrasing bell hooks, Tyler Stovall explains the performative functions of race in relation to a *white society* and a *black Other*. He argues that there are

> two types of black performance: performance as complicity in racial oppression for the sake of survival, and performance as ritual play. The first involves a display of blackness as a consumer product for a larger nonblack audience, whereas in the second case black performance functions as a liberatory practice that emphasizes the creation and articulation of languages of identity. (221–22)

As a means of self-preservation in an oppressive world, the black Other performs race to create a spectacle in line with the archetypes defined by a white society, while he or she also performs race in an attempt to break free of those archetypes. Stovall makes clear that these two performances can never be wholly separated, as blackness is still always defined in relation to whiteness. As Homi Bhabha explains, these two seemingly contrary performances — mimicry and autonomy — fulfill the paradoxical colonial desire for a different/same Other:

"Colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, *as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite*. . . . In order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference" (86; emphasis in the original).

Like African-American identity, First Nations identity also exists in relationship to the expectations of a white society — expectations that derive from a complicated history of white, European interference. As Renate Eigenbrod points out, "It was and is colonial society that deprived Aboriginal people of the choice of movement by creating 'homelands' (among other actions). Their often-cited 'sense of place' is complicated by factors that have nothing to do with Aboriginal cultural identity" (27). Aboriginals, like African Americans, must continually construct identities that exist, in part, in relationship to white oppression, and thus, "colonial perceptions of Aboriginal people . . . form such a pervasive and oppressive voice in their lives, that self-identification becomes dialogic by necessity" (Eigenbrod 185). The dialogic aspect here, as with African Americans, is a dual performance of race, characterized by fulfillment of racial expectations alongside assertions of autonomous difference.

I want to stress here that race as performance does not necessarily imply that the performance is a conscious one, as "performance" may simply refer to the presentation of one's skin; thus, *it is the spectators of the performance that determine racialization*. However, Stovall does point out that the traditional black-white relationship can be subverted by focusing on the performance of race itself as a "ritualistic act that binds a group of people together" (222). In this sense, the construction of a black community (or a First Nations community) acts to decentralize power, turning *white* into *Other* and destabilizing the role of the spectator. However, in the case of War Party's use

of hip hop as a form of expression, a medium generally thought to be linked with African-American identity, Cree becomes the racial Other. It would be foolish to argue that whiteness does not play a factor in this case, as both identities are marginalized by whiteness, but the claim of appropriation between these two marginalized identities prompts us to consider a discussion of the politics of ownership surrounding rap music, including the racial origins of hip hop.

The debate over the "rights" to rap music is a major site of contention within the academic discourses surrounding hip hop, with two rather essentializing positions as the main arguments: hip hop as a purely black form of expression, and hip hop as a global medium. I would suggest, in agreement with Imani Perry, that perhaps the ownership of the musical form lies somewhere between these two poles, within a politics of marginalization.

A proponent of hip hop as a fundamentally black medium, Bakari Kitwana argues in *Why White Kids Love Hip-Hop* (2005) that

> it must be stated unequivocally that hip-hop is a subculture of Black American youth culture — period. Yes, it's become en vogue to imagine hip-hop as belonging to everyone. Sure, there have been other cultural influences. But influences are just that, influences. Black American cultural attitudes, style, verbal and body language, as well as insider Black cultural perspective, not only were prevalent at hip-hop's origins but remain at its core today. (150)

Kitwana sees hip hop as inseparable from black American culture because the two cultures thoroughly intersect and overlap. From this perspective, the racialization of hip hop as a black art form (and the nationalization of hip hop as an American art form) is permanent, and the use of this art form by anyone other than African Americans is damaging to the foundations

of hip hop as a medium for specific racial expression. As Perry Hall notes,

> the pattern of separating the art from the people leads to an appropriation of aesthetic innovation that not only "exploits" Black cultural forms, commercially and otherwise, but also nullifies the cultural meaning those forms provide for African Americans. The appropriated forms become ineffective as expressions and affirmations of the unique cultural experiences from which they arise. (31–32)

However, the argument for an African-American aesthetics that is linked inextricably with the African-American cultural experience is reductive, to say the least. This view of hip hop as an undeniably African-American mode of expression establishes problematic binaries: someone is either black, or they are not. Moreover, if hip hop culture is a subculture of African-American culture, then how do we define something as multivalent as "African-American culture," especially considering its inherently diasporic nature? As Adam Krims points out, "describing African-American musical traditions as a melding of African and American traditions may risk simplifying an important dynamic" (153), namely, that various Afrodiasporic cultures contribute to an extremely wide-ranging African-American identity.

Rather than seeing contemporary hip hop as a product of one localized and nationalized culture, Krims identifies rap music as a globalized and commodified musical form. He argues that rap is "a profoundly impure product, one that has by no means lost its origins as an African-American vernacular practice, but in which, nevertheless, that origin survives in transformed resonances, gestures, and counter-gestures, and in newly re-localized cultural inflections" (Krims 2). In this sense, rap takes on a more transcultural or translocal quality, with the focus shifting

away from "original ownership" toward a mapping of the current social conditions that facilitate the continued production and reception of rap music. Alastair Pennycook makes a similar argument in *Global Englishes and Transcultural Flows* (2007), noting how such a model represents faithfulness to hip-hop culture: "Any attempt to trace too pure a lineage for hip-hop . . . runs counter to aspects of hip-hop culture itself, which places great emphasis on borrowing, sampling and multiple origins, rather than lineage and fixity" (88).

Of course, neither Krims's nor Pennycook's arguments for the transcultural nature of hip hop address the question of appropriation. Regardless of the complicated dynamics of African-American identity, and regardless of the current global state of hip hop, we cannot deny the fact that rap music emerged in the United States, during the 1970s, in urban, *black* neighbourhoods as a means for specific racial commentary and empowerment. Furthermore, and I think I can make this assumption with confidence, the majority of the general public, including most hip-hop fans themselves, recognize rap as an African-American genre of music. Consequently, if contemporary rap music is a transcultural or "universal" phenomenon,[4] we cannot ignore the fact that, at some point, some form of cultural appropriation, whether for good or ill, took place.

Perry attempts to address this notion of appropriation by arguing that claims for one form of ownership do not negate

4 Jason Rodriquez argues that labeling hip hop as a universal medium is a strategy that allows white hip-hop fans and MCs to invoke what he describes as a "color-blind ideology," enabling them to "draw on abstract, liberal notions of equality ("equal opportunity for all") to disconnect race from the power relations in which inequality and racial discourses are embedded" (646). This ideology (whether invoked consciously or not) justifies their appropriation of a racialized art form. Kitwana, in a similar sentiment, sees the label of "universality" as a refusal to admit a latent desire for and love of "blackness" (152).

the other and that the current state of hip hop is influenced by both transcultural and African-American origins. Perry takes the two essentializing arguments and merges them into one multifaceted view of hip hop:

> The accuracy of the assertion that hip hop has multiracial and multicultural origins does not suggest that it is not black. . . . Why can't something be black (read, *black American*) and be influenced by a number of cultures and styles at the same time? The idea that it cannot emerges from the absurd reality that blackness in the United States is constructed as a kind of pure existence. (11; emphasis in the original)

Thus, hip hop can be an amalgam of Afrodiasporic musical and cultural forms while also being an African-American form in itself. Likewise, rap music can be appropriated by the global hip-hop community and still retain aesthetics of the African-American experience. What we need to consider, then, especially when looking at a group such as War Party, are the facets of hip hop that connect the local African-American experience with the global phenomenon of hip hop.

Halifu Osumare investigates this connection between the different geographies of hip hop by illuminating the "connective marginalities" that link the African-American experience with the rest of the world. He argues that "hip hop culture, as an extension of African American . . . popular culture . . . becomes a global signifier for several forms of marginalization. In each case 'blackness,' along with its perceived status, is implicated as a global sign" (269). These marginalities, according to Osumare, are intrinsically linked to the assumed "blackness" of hip hop and include class, culture (to which I might add religion), historical oppression, and "'youth' as a peripheral social status" (268). As a result, identification with marginalization becomes one of the major conditions for "participation in the communally

oriented Africanist aesthetic that has become international" (286).

In terms of contemporary rap music, marginalization, or, more specifically, the implied racial marginalization that Osumare describes, is a central characteristic in the aesthetics of hip-hop culture. In this sense, it is the representation of social and racial conditions behind global hip hop, rather than a specific focus on "blackness," that matters, since the African-American aesthetics of hip hop are, more often than not, collapsed into a global framework of racial marginalization. This does not mean, as Perry points out, that "blackness" ceases to exist in such a discourse; it simply means that regardless of specific geographic location or historical background, racial and social marginalization in a general sense take precedence over the specific black aesthetic. Thus, the connective marginalities between First Nations and African Americans are strengthened by the fact that First Nations can identify so closely with the images representing the African-American struggle against segregation. Indigenous rappers in Canada can relate easily to the narratives of race conveyed through American rap, and "these identifications have been facilitated by the racialized images exported through hip-hop and rap as music made by proud and rebellious African Americans struggling to overcome marginalization in a racist society" (Dennis 197). In other words, Aboriginal groups fluently appropriate black cultural aesthetics because the images translate so naturally to their own racial marginalization.

As Krims notes in his analysis of Cree rapper Bannock (Darren Tootoosis, cousin to Rex Smallboy), "within the context of rap, it becomes the more remarkable to contrast Native imaginary presence to African-American imaginary presence" (181) in relation to the social circumstances surrounding both. Krims describes the hometown of Bannock — Hobbema, Alberta, also

the hometown of War Party — in juxtaposition to the black, urban ghettos of the United States, from where gangsta rap takes most of its aesthetics. Not only does Krims find a parallel between the segregation underlying ghetto neighbourhoods and Native reserves, but the unique social circumstances of Hobbema suggest other similarities. Thanks to the $40,000-plus royalty check given to all Hobbema band members on their eighteenth birthdays (a result of oil findings on the reserve in the 1970s), Hobbema youth have the means to translate the reserve into a space of "expensive cars," with "a thriving drug scene," an "active market in firearms," and "one of the highest violent crime rates in Canada" (Krims 184–85). Of course, as Krims explains, "this is only a partial perspective, and emphasizing this aspect of Hobbema life risks the same caricature of that community as is often inflicted on African-American inner-city communities in the United States" (185). But the fact remains that these social conditions provide an easy opportunity for a Cree MC in Hobbema to "deploy borrowed styles and images to rearticulate a locally specific set of conflicts and a stance toward his situation" (Krims 199).

American hip hop as a genre is intimately connected to notions of space and place. From graffiti art (one of the four elements of hip-hop culture), which literally appropriates public and private spaces, to regional sub-genres of rap (West Coast, East Coast, Southern, etcetera), to the common convention of hometown shout-outs at the beginning of songs, to the Afrocentric lyrics of Afrika Bambaataa, place is an inseparable facet of hip-hop culture and rap music, and in many senses, rappers utilize this focus on geography to convey notions of authenticity. The New York MC, for example, aware of his or her space in relation to the city where American hip-hop culture was born, might evoke the city in order to stress his or her intimacy with the culture, as in Nas's "N.Y. State of Mind." Evocations of New

York might also allow an MC to assert his or her own role in the inception of hip hop, as in KRS-One's "South Bronx 2002," a throwback to Boogie Down Productions' 1987 hit "South Bronx." (KRS-One was a founding member of the influential New York rap group.) Similarly, a Los Angeles MC might evoke place as an attempt to prove an authentic gangsta background, like NWA (Niggaz With Attitude) does with "Straight Outta Compton."

Krims argues that "what a non-New York (and non-Los Angeles) MC or group lacks in linkage to hip-hop's origins, it receives in the projection of local authenticity" (124). Of course, War Party does not stress their link to Hobbema life in quite the same manner as the examples cited above. Instead, they focus on a more general construction of space in their music — the reservation. Through images of the reservation in their music videos, War Party offers a representation of the local that is specific enough to convey a sense of First Nations racial marginalization while also ambiguous enough to be inclusive of any global Aboriginal person living on a reservation.

The videos for "Feelin' Reserved" (2002) and "All for One" (2007) are perfect examples of how War Party highlights this representation of marginalized space. Both videos focus on street-level perspectives of the reservation that highlight the disrepair of buildings, while emphasizing the unity of the people who live there. The video for "All for One" opens to a slow-motion shot of two young Native boys playing basketball at the side of a house. The structure is clearly abandoned. The windows have no glass, and we can see scorch marks and charred framing beams from a recent fire; tall weeds line the edge of the building, and the lawn is composed of dirt and patches of dead grass. The video continues with similar images of structural decay, including a pair of old shoes hanging from a telephone wire, garage doors with graffiti on them, and fences that are falling apart and missing posts. However, despite the fact that these

images of disrepair are prominent features in the video, the main focus is a large community of people, including children, who presumably live on the reservation. Throughout the video, the community, led by the members of War Party, marches down a street lined with nondescript but well-kept houses; the people bear banners and signs that outline community values, such as "NO DRUGS," "NO ALCOHOL," "TRADITION," and "UNITY." Similarly, the music video for "Feelin' Reserved" establishes a dual focus on disrepair and community: the members of War Party are featured driving through the reservation in their SUVs, rapping against a backdrop of dusty roads and crooked fences. Once again, though, members of the community are highlighted alongside the images of decaying structures — a boy holding his pet dog, a group of middle-aged women line dancing, an older man in a cowboy hat and jeans, and so on.

These music videos reveal spatial marginalization in two ways. On the one hand, the videos show us the all too familiar depiction of a poverty-stricken neighbourhood that is literally falling to pieces. On the other, both videos clearly highlight the strength and resilience of the reservation community — a population of people bound together and marginalized together by place. By drawing attention to these aspects of spatial marginalization, War Party enables their audience to make the same connection Krims does between reserve and ghetto. But the depiction of the reserve is ambiguous in its representation: the videos reveal no recognizable landmarks of any kind, nor do we see any street names or any other markers specifying place. Thus, rather than appearing simply as a caricatured ghetto community, the very local images of the Hobbema reserve immediately become significant on a global scale.

This shift between the local and the global is an example of what geographer Neil Smith calls "scale bending," which refers to the strategic (or unconsciously strategic) representations of

space and place so as to create shifts between the public and private, or local, national, and global geographic scales (or any other scales). This concept is relevant in the context of racial appropriation: Smith argues that "scales emerge from a dialectic of cooperation and competition which always involves social struggle," with the result that "geographical scale is the spatial repository of structured social assumptions about what constitutes normal and abnormal forms of social difference" (197). Of course, War Party does not appropriate the image of inner-city ghettos (this is a leap that their audience must make on their own), but, through the evocation of marginalized space, War Party is able to establish the problematic of such a space on a global scale. Scale bending also operates in War Party's exploration of Indianness, simultaneously taking place on local, national, and global scales while focusing on the most personal space of all, the body.

Scale bending is also relevant to notions of tribal imagery. As Mohammed Yunus Rafiq (of Tanzania's Maasai hip-hop group, X-Plastaz) points out: "We can be tribal, and at the same time, we can also be global!" (Verán et al. 281). Perhaps a more succinct observation would be that in order to be tribal (or to use the aesthetics of tribalism), one is *required* to bend scales to become also global, as hip-hop identity must be understood on a global level in order for difference to be noticed. Similarly, the predominant African-American aesthetic of rap music must exist as globally circulated commodity before a group like War Party, who play with notions of racial categorization, can even truly exist.

So the remaining question is, does War Party play black? Perhaps to a degree, but considering the seeming interchangeability between many of the images of African-American and First Nations racial segregation, "appropriation" comes across as a rather strong word. Yes, an audience's recognition

of African-American racial aesthetics in First Nations hip hop does amplify War Party's racially marginalized status, which in turn authorizes their participation in the hip-hop community, but when the images are translated to correspond with the Canadian Aboriginal experience, we can hardly argue that a cultural theft is taking place. As Frank Davey describes, "theft," although often used synonymously with "appropriation," is not even a relevant description of the act:

> Cultures are not essences to be stolen, but complexes of activity continually constructed in language and action. All that writers [or, in this case, rappers] external to a community can assemble are simulacra of that culture, their own constructions of it, which point not to that culture but to the writer him or herself, with her or his own culture, politics, and needs. The "crime" committed is one of fraud rather than theft. (29)

Davey suggests that "fraud" might be a more accurate term for cultural appropriation, but considering War Party's focus on the exploration of racial marginalization, even "fraud" seems like a strong word, as they never once claim to represent anything but a Native hip-hop group. (War Party's appropriation of African-American aesthetics is hardly on par with W. P. Kinsella's false literary representations of Hobbema Aboriginals.) Furthermore, characterizing the use of intercultural aesthetics as a form of theft or fraud ignores the possibility that these seemingly African-American images might be used in a satirical manner, to comment on the absurdity of particularizing oneself through another's identity. War Party, in a dramatic interlude between songs ("Intermission II"), does just this when they satirize the gangsta lifestyle, drawing attention to the constructed nature of racial representations in hip hop. After a prolonged chorus of guns firing and exaggerated, stereotypical Native voices shouting phrases such as "This is

fuckin' real, bro!" a voice interrupts saying, "Hey! Guns don't kill people; stupid motherfuckers kill people. We ain't *gangsta!* It's entertainment . . . this is hip hop" (War Party, *Greatest Natives*). This *is* hip hop — an aesthetics of race.

As racial dynamics continuously change in the United States and worldwide, hip hop and the messages behind hip hop become more and more transcultural and translocal. This globalization of rap does not mean the decimation of the original impetus behind hip hop, nor does it mean that artists such as Afrika Bambaataa or Public Enemy, who participated in the African-Americanization of hip hop, will become irrelevant. As I have argued, hip hop remains a highly racialized medium of expression, and even in its transcultural state, elements of the original racialization still exist. Stating their opinion on these notions of originality, identity, and appropriation, War Party's "Feelin' Reserved" puts things best: "Don't let no one tell you that you ain't a Cree / See what we see / But don't be who we be / Being yourself starts with originality" (*The Reign*). However, the "originality" that War Party discusses here — and, in fact, any claim of an "original" identity, especially one so steeped in the politics of First Nations racial representation — is not necessarily a claim of being unique in the sense that we normally think of the word. The very nature of being a Cree rapper is part performance: the statement itself, a declaration of tribal affiliation, attests to this. Likewise, utilizing tribal images — images of "original" cultural practices — is also part of the performance of playing Indian that War Party participates in. But of course, we must also not forget that "originality has little authority or meaning without being copied. . . . Indeed, the 'authentic' gains authority the more it is copied" (Handley and Lewis 2). This is precisely why War Party, consciously or not, must perform, and reperform, the aesthetics of race — to be recognized as both First Nations individuals and as rappers.

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Toward a Theory of the Dubject: Doubling and Spacing the Self in Canadian Media Culture

MARK A. McCUTCHEON

> Electronic storage devices function as an extension of our own memory. They are capable of storing our thoughts.
>
> JUDGE DEAN PREGESON

> One of the things our grandchildren will find quaintest about us is that we distinguish the digital from the real.
>
> WILLIAM GIBSON

In David Cronenberg's 1983 cult film *Videodrome,* an early scene, which stages a television interview, signals that the going is about to get deeply weird when one of the three interview guests is wheeled onto the set as a television set. Joining the film's protagonist (Max Renn, played by James Woods) and love interest

(Nicki Brand, played by Debbie Harry) is a TV set showing a close-up of Professor Brian O'Blivion, a "media prophet" who, with his first lines in this interview scene, identifies himself as a nearly transparent parody of Marshall McLuhan. To the TV interviewer's first question, Dr. O'Blivion responds that "the television screen has become the retina of the mind's eye" and, as though to explain this cryptic claim, then says: "That's why I refuse to appear on television, except on television." Parked centre stage on the set, between the interviewer and the protagonists, O'Blivion looks uncannily from one speaker to another as though he were present on the set. Throughout the film, O'Blivion only ever appears on a TV screen. In a subsequent scene, which marks the film's decisive departure from realism into surrealism, the protagonist watches a taped recording of O'Blivion in which he starts addressing the viewer directly, as the TV set on which he appears begins to take on a monstrous life of its own. Towards the film's end, we learn that O'Blivion has died before the film's diegetic time — before the interview — and has "lived" for some time only as a private library of videotapes. "This is him," O'Blivion's daughter-turned-curator explains to Renn. "This is all that's left. . . . He made thousands of them, sometimes three or four [tapes] a day. I keep him alive as best I can. . . . He became convinced that public life on television was more real than private life in the flesh. He wasn't afraid to let his body die." As a bank of videotapes occupying some uncanny kind of afterlife, Brian O'Blivion embodies, in fictional form, a kind of radically remediated and redistributed subjectivity — an uploaded, transmitted, and somehow still interactive subjectivity: a *dub*jectivity.

In recent articles on social media ("Ipsographing the Dubject") and Canadian cinema ("*Frankenstein*"), I have suggested the figure of the *dubject* as a postmodern form of mediatized and remediated subjectivity, assembled through technologies

of mechanical reproduction and distributed through networks of electronic distribution that blur the boundaries between performance and recording, consumer and commodity, the organic self and its technological others. The dubject is a self committed to its own recording; a subject translated from the site of the individual body to the mediated spaces of representation; a self dubbed and doubled — a *doppelgänger* self whose "live," corporeal presence becomes radically *supplemented* (in the deconstructive sense of the term) by its different and distributed embodiments in recordings and representations. The dubject is a kind of subject whose *corporeally* embodied self-consciousness and experience of self are less accompanied than displaced, even deterritorialized, by *mediated* embodiments and iterations of oneself. In some cases, the trajectory of this displacement becomes a strategy of survival, a tactical retreat: from the real into simulation, from the flesh into the word. What's more, such processes of *dubjection* seem specifically prominent in — and contingent on — cultural and economic conditions peculiar to Canada and its place in contemporary globalization. Examples of dubject formation on this account abound in Canadian culture, not only in fictional representations like that of O'Blivion in *Videodrome* but also, more strangely, in reality, as will be suggested with reference to specific Canadian cultural producers and creative practitioners. It must be said, at this point, that one of the effects of a theory of the dubject may be to blur the distinction between fiction and reality even more than poststructuralist and postmodern theories of representation already have. I do not take the specificity of the Canadian contexts that inform this theorization to entail any claim to national exclusivity or priority for it. That *dub* is integral to the proposed theory points to just one of its globalized, diasporic involvements. This preliminary inquiry merely suggests that certain Canadian contexts and

experiences have contributed to a certain tradition in practices of representation and mediation that signal some potentially wider — and weirder — implications for everyday life in the overdeveloped, technologically overdriven, and hypermediated Western world today.

Accordingly, the present essay explores more extensively this preliminary theory of *dubjectivity* by considering the example of *Videodrome*'s O'Blivion and a selection of other Canadian cultural texts: the linguistic-turn allegory of Tony Burgess's novel *Pontypool Changes Everything* and its film version *Pontypool;* the remote-signing invention of Margaret Atwood; and the recording career of virtuoso pianist Glenn Gould. Taken together, these cases and texts illustrate the contextual, discursive, performative, and productive parameters of a theory for rethinking the category and constitution of the subject in the postmodern network society, of which Canada represents as exemplary a provisional site for concrete analysis as any other overdeveloped Western state and to which it also brings its own peculiar, postcolonial culture of technological nationalism, or rather technological *trans*nationalism.

At the intersection of "the technological imaginary" (Genosko xxxvi) and "the transnational matrix" of globalization (Moylan 184), the problematic of technological transnationalism proposes a revision of the "technological nationalism" that Maurice Charland theorized in his eponymous 1986 article (206). Canadian postmodernist Arthur Kroker took up the term in *Technology and the Canadian Mind* (10), hailing it as "the essence of the Canadian state and . . . the Canadian identity" (10), an effect of Canada's geo-historical position, "between . . . the 'technological imperative' in American empire and the classical origins of the technological dynamo in European history" (7). However, Kroker left his keywords largely unexamined: he held *Canada, technology,* and *nation* to be self-evident. But as a rudimentary model

of Canadian postcoloniality, "technological nationalism" may be reconsidered now as a kind of *trans*nationalism, thus evoking the transgression and transcendence of national borders (Clingman 129) but also the transplanting and transforming of national forms (Balibar viii, 176). Grounded by postcolonial contexts like cultural imperialism and neoliberal hegemony that overdetermine Canadian citizenship and sovereignty, the figure of the dubject articulates a complex problematic of identity and belonging in the context of cultural globalization.

Canadian dubjectivity entails both a transnational spacing — the remediated "extension of our own bodies and senses" — and a technological doubling — the "lease [of] our central nervous systems to various corporations" (McLuhan, *Understanding* 99–100). The dubject takes form in multimedia bricolage and in a redistribution of the products of that bricolage, a redistribution that is at once an infiltration and a dispossession. As a factitious, tessellated form of identity, dubjectivity might be understood as the national mediascape's counterpart to the state's ethnoscape of multiculturalism, which for postcolonial critics like Neil Lazarus is "the strict ideological correlate of transnational capitalism" (223). Read as a symptom of Canada's colonial experience of various cultural and media empires, dubjectivity remixes the individual citizen in a manner not unlike that in which Canadian multicultural policy reimagines the national citizenry: as the commodity of a global market, a product of competing intellectual property claims, a consumer of media consumed by media.

FROM SUBJECT TO DUBJECT

Before turning to the illustrative cases I want to discuss, some reflections on the proposed portmanteau are in order. Why remix the *subject* with *dub* as a prefix? While the category of the

subject traditionally has described an ontology of individual selfhood as "unified, self-present, self-determining, autonomous, and homogenous" (Hawthorn 180), the linguistic and cultural turns effected, in the postwar period, by humanities and social science research, in general, and by continental critical theory, in particular, have displaced that essentialist ontology of subjectivity with a socially constructed reconceptualization of the subject as "secondary, constructed (by language, or ideology, for instance), volatile, standing in its own shadow, and self-divided" (180). Judith Butler, in *The Psychic Life of Power,* undertakes an extensive theorization of the fundamentally paradoxical relationship between subjectivity and power: "Subjection consists precisely in this fundamental dependency on a discourse we never chose but that, paradoxically, initiates and sustains our agency" (2). Butler acknowledges the discursive and linguistic constitution of the subject: "Individuals come to occupy the site of the subject (the subject simultaneously emerges as a 'site'), and they enjoy intelligibility only to the extent that they are, as it were, first established in language" (10–11). Working from psychoanalytic as well as poststructuralist theories, Butler considers the subject's linguistic constitution and its paradoxical "modality of power" (6) as aspects of the subject's founding division, "a splitting and reversal constitutive of the subject itself" as a site of "the reiteration of power" (15–16). Butler analyzes theories of subjection in order to ask "how we might make such a conception of the subject work as a notion of political agency in postliberatory times" (18); she works out this notion by rethinking the subject not as a formed product but as a process of becoming, "an uneasy practice of repetition and its risks, compelled yet incomplete . . . a repetition that risks life — in its current organization" (29–30). Given the recognition of self-division and repetition already integrated into the social-constructionist theory of subjectivity,

what then does this theory gain by remixing its keyword as *dub*jectivity?

For one thing, it gains *gain* itself: gain understood in the technical sense it has for audio electronics, as the ability to increase or amplify a signal's power. Boosting certain signals is one of the bases of dub: as historians of DJ culture Bill Broughton and Frank Brewster summarize it, "a dub mix is essentially the bare bones of a track with the bass turned up . . . adding space to a track, [so] what is left has far more impact" (128). Just as dub is not a process of original composition but of remixing and reconfiguring extant works, a theory of the dubject is not attempting to invent or advance an entirely new model of social selfhood but rather to adapt, modify, and modulate the social-constructionist model: to amplify its contingency on, overdeterminations by, and articulations of media practices; to make it resonate more clearly with the media- and technoscapes of postmodern globalization; to bring a new emphasis on space as counterpoint to the social-constructionist model's "temporal" bias (Butler 30).

To mix dub into the subject is to sample for its contemporary productions one specific contingency of mediation in postwar black Atlantic music: *dub,* the "reducing" of instrumental "tracks to their basslines and rhythms" and the "foregrounding [of] certain instruments in the mix," recording studio practices that have become widely and rightly celebrated for influencing "every significant development in popular music since the 1960s" and for "laying the foundations for remix culture" (Shapiro 50–51). Erik Davis's explication of dub is worth quoting at length:

> To create dub, producers and engineers manipulate preexisting tracks of music . . . strip the music down to the bare bones of rhythm and then build it up again through layers of inhuman echoes, electronic ectoplasm, cosmic rays. Good dub sounds like the recording studio itself has begun to hallucinate.

> Dub arose from doubling — the common Jamaican practice of reconfiguring or "versioning" a prerecorded track into any number of new songs. Dub calls the apparent "authenticity" of roots reggae into question because dub destroys the holistic integrity of singer and song. It proclaims a primary postmodern law: there is no original, no first ground, no homeland. By mutating its repetitions of previously used material, dub adds something new and distinctly uncanny, vaporizing into a kind of *doppelgänger* music. Despite the crisp attack of its drums and the heaviness of its bass, it swoops through empty space, spectral and disembodied. Like ganja, dub opens the "inner door." John Corbett even links the etymology of the word "dub" with *duppie* (Jamaican patois for ghost). . . . Dub music not only drums up the ghost in the machine, but gives the ghost room to dance. ("Dub, Scratch, and the Black Star")

These definitions and interpretations of dub suggest several reasons for overdubbing the subject.

1. Articulating embodiment. That two of these definitions share, in their trope of the "bare bones," an emphasis on articulation, in its anatomical and expressive senses, should help to prevent the argument here from being misread as a "continuation of the rationalist dream of disembodied mind" (Penny, qtd. in Bolter and Grusin 252). The practices that constitute dubjection as discussed here could all too easily be taken to reinforce the Cartesian, masculinist division of mind and body. Instead, following studies of new media and subjectivity by thinkers like Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin, Sherry Turkle, and Donna Haraway, I want to recognize the quite formidable materiality of both subject formation and its mediations, processes commonly assumed to be immaterial. "To say, for example, that the self is expressed in its email affiliations," write Bolter and Grusin, "is not to say that the self is disembodied but that it is embodied in a particular mediated form" (234). For Haraway,

the miniaturization and outsourcing of electronic technology mystify its materiality and make it mobile; moreover, such technology is, fundamentally and fatally, "about consciousness — or its simulation" (153). Even Marshall McLuhan's media theory, on which these more recent thinkers found their own work, posits the materiality of media practices, for example in the tactile titular pun of his popular 1967 book, the *Medium Is the Massage*. Dub's origins in dance music production and the bodily affecting preponderance of bass in its methods help the proposed portmanteau to articulate both the materiality and mediation of embodiment even as the theory problematizes and defamiliarizes what we mean by materiality, mediation, and embodiment. "Feminist theory recognizes the body as both a medium and an element in the interplay of contemporary media," write Bolter and Grusin. "The interaction of technology and the body today comes . . . through the ways in which visual and verbal media present the body and participate in the definition of the self" (254).

2. *Doubling.* "Dub arose from doubling . . . 'versioning' a prerecorded track"; and dub's media act as a medium, channeling the black Atlantic *hauntology* of duppies, ghosts, spectres, uncanny doubles (Derrida, *Spectres* 161; Brand 49). The doubling of subjectivities in the context of media is, of course, very different than the racialized doubling of consciousness theorized by black diasporic intellectuals like Dubois, Fanon, Brand, and Gilroy. What dubjectivity and double consciousness, while very differently contextualized, *may* share is a sense of the connection between deracination and representation, the difference of repetition, the internalized and projected distinction between an internal and a projected self.

In *Videodrome,* O'Blivion's remediated appearances and oracular statements exemplify the uncanny doubling conjured by

the *dubject*. The term *re*mediation, which I have borrowed from Bolter and Grusin, itself inscribes a doubling movement that makes it most suitable to the present discussion. Remediation is their term for the "double logic" by which new and old media alike strive, simultaneously, for both transparent immediacy and "hypermediation," a preoccupation with media forms (reminiscent of McLuhan's maxim that the content of new media is old media: theatre as the "content" of film, for example, and film as the content of television [19]). Bolter and Grusin's claim that "we are that which the film or television camera is trained on, and at the same time we are the camera itself" (231) echoes O'Blivion's own claim that "the television screen has become the retina of the mind's eye." O'Blivion embodies the uncanny double, the *doppelgänger* character of the dubject. Is he alive or dead? Good guy or bad guy? Present or absent? Corporeal or cathode? Inspired or insane? Public or private? Real or imagined? Himself or someone else? Both or neither? Only a few of these questions receive any answer in the scene that presents the "real" O'Blivion, embodied as the tape library, and these answers are at best speculative and provisional; the other questions contribute to the radical ambiguity of the whole film. Moreover, O'Blivion's role as an explanatory "father-figure" (Beard 143) is doubled; he shares this role with the CEO Barry Convex, whose corporate profiteering contrasts O'Blivion's public-interest projects. What's more, O'Blivion's character is a *roman à clef* fictional double for Marshall McLuhan, who had died some three years before the film's release (though not of the brain tumour from which he *and* his fictional counterpart both suffered). And still more: O'Blivion's every appearance in *Videodrome* doubles the form of the film itself, *mediatizing* its cinematic frame by inserting a second, video frame within it; the film often exploits this formal doubling for *mise en abyme* effects that heighten its disorienting efforts. *Mediatization* is

not the same as remediation, although it is related: in Philip Auslander's adapted use of this term (which he borrows from Baudrillard), it describes performance practices that incorporate other media: "'mediatized performance' is performance that is circulated on television, as audio or video recordings, and in other forms based in technologies of reproduction" (5). As we will see with reference to the other Canadian texts and producers sampled below, the experience of uncanny doubling — of being shadowed or haunted by one's remediated double — becomes a recurring preoccupation and thus a defining dimension of dubjection.

The multiple ways in which O'Blivion enacts diegetic doublings and embodies formal doublings dramatize the uncanny qualities of dub processes and their significance for a theory of dubjection. The "versioning" of dub is not the making of an identical duplication but "adding space": simultaneously reducing ("stripping down") and rebuilding or, in a word, deconstructing. *Supplementing*. The deconstructive supplement differentiates, defers, *displaces* that to which it is attached; as theorized by Jacques Derrida, the supplement not only *adds to* but *replaces* that which it supplements (*Grammatology* 145). In this way, the supplement poses a lethal threat. As Avital Ronnell summarizes Derrida's history of writing itself as the "degraded" and deadly supplement of speech: "Writing is not nontechnological, obviously . . . it's already on the side of death and technology" (59). The uncanny quality of doubling obtains in precisely this, its supplementary movement between life and death, a movement that disrupts and confounds this basic ontological division. Commentators on various forms of recording media have noted their dangerous supplementarity: Simon Reynolds writes of "sampladelic" music like dub that it constitutes a composite sonic "chimera" (45); similarly, of celluloid film, William Nestrick writes that it "animates" its

subjects into an uncanny afterlife (294–96). In *Videodrome,* not only does O'Blivion destabilize the border between life and death, but engenders his own supplement in the protagonist Renn, who, in the last scene, appears to translate his own self into the uncanny space of the TV screen, in the act of destroying his own corporeal body.

3. *Spacing:* The deferrals and displacements of the supplement bridge the doubling and spacing characteristics of dub. That its doublings are "uncanny," as Davis says, is bound up with its confusions between life and death, as well as its spatializing and *spacey* effects (as Davis notes about "giving the ghost room to dance"). Something of spacing is latent in the word *uncanny* itself, an English supplement to the German *unheimlich,* unhome-like: different and distant from home. A theory of dubjectivity thus resonates with — and appropriates the problematic premises of — McLuhan's argument that the environment of new media, which for him television exemplified (as *Videodrome* parodies), is predominantly an "acoustic space":

> McLuhan believed that electronic media were subverting visual space by introducing "acoustic space:" a psychological, social and perceptual mode that eroded visual space's logical clarity and Cartesian subjectivity, returning us electronically to a kind of premodern experience — what he once called, with characteristic sloppiness, "the Africa within." (Davis, "Roots and Wires")

Davis brings McLuhan into unlikely dialogue with the black Atlantic theory of Paul Gilroy, and a theory of dubjection, I suppose, extends this improbable discussion. As Richard Cavell has argued (xiii), McLuhan directed his major research questions to contexts of space, of surroundings, of environment; hence, for instance, his retroactive positioning as a founder of the field

of "media ecology." Through his "translation . . . entirely into the video world" (Beard 132), O'Blivion occupies a simultaneously indeterminate space — from where (and/or when) is he broadcasting? — and a closely confined space — the cathode-ray small screen. The revelatory scene that exposes O'Blivion's fate as a video library is set in a high-ceilinged room, through which the camera pans across shelves full of tapes, suggesting the professor's encyclopedic knowledge, the extent of his media obsession, and the more expansive space into which he has *dubjected* himself. Again aping McLuhan, O'Blivion's indeterminate redistribution problematizes the spatial dimension of electronic remediation as a globalized space: O'Blivion inhabits the "strange new world" in which "television is reality and reality is less than television," a world evocative of McLuhan's "global village."

Dub is a "space craft" (Perry, qtd. in Toop 114) in that its reduction of an instrumental track to drum and bass opens sonic, conceptual, and affective space: space for a vocalist to occupy with lyrics, toasts, or rap; space for different instrumentals and sound effects; and, more abstractly, cognitive and contemplative space, as privileged in Rastafarian religious practice. (Angela McRobbie marvels at "how much thinking there is in black music," citing black British critics like Gilroy and Kodwo Eshun who have articulated its "investment of artistry, politics, history, and literary voice" [43]). Dubjection translates this principle of spacing into practices of distribution: the dispersals, displacements, and deterritorializations of the remediated self among the myriad globalized networks of electronic media. And these distributions achieve global (and even, technically, extraterrestrial) reach in the affordances of electronic and digital information and communication technologies. Differentiating between *virtual* and *networked* subjectivities, Bolter and Grusin describe the latter as "made up both of that self that is doing

the networking and the various selves that are presented on the network" (Bolter and Grusin 233).

As a remediated remix of the poststructuralist theory of subjectivity, the dubject articulates and reorganizes its embodiments, amplifies and proliferates its doubling effects, and extends and redirects its spacing movements. In the figure of the dubject converge several curious contexts — the cut-and-mix principles of black Atlantic music, continental theory, Canadian media culture, and the technoscapes of postmodern globalization — and it engages other theoretical and literary contexts, such as science fiction, Afro-Futurism, diaspora studies, science and technology studies, gender theory, and post-humanism, which the present essay gives me scope only to flag for further investigation.

O'Blivion finds numerous doubles, antecedents, and avatars in fantastic and speculative cultural production generally, and Canadian science fiction specifically. From the Gothic tradition of Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, the *doppelgänger* figure transforms, in modern and postmodern science fiction, into the figure of a digitized, downloadable consciousness. Bolter and Grusin track this figure through "virtual reality" films like *Strange Days* (1995) and *Johnny Mnemonic* (1995), in which "a character casts his or her mind into the computer, usually to have it trapped there or to exchange or merge it with other minds" (247). Similar films include *Tron* (1982), *The Matrix* (1999), and the television programs *Battlestar Galactica* (2004–9) and *Max Headroom* (1987–88).

In Canadian science fiction literature, we find similar figures of digital dubjection. William Gibson (who wrote the aforementioned *Johnny Mnemonic*) adapts this figure extensively. In his 1984 novel *Neuromancer,* one character is a dead computer hacker who has been "recorded" as "a construct, a

hardwired ROM cassette replicating a dead man's skills, obsessions, knee-jerk responses" (76–77). In Peter Watts's 2006 novel *Blindsight,* traditional burial rites have been superseded by a virtual Heaven, a "utopian environment" to which "Ascendants" upload their personalities for indefinite occupation (33). In Nalo Hopkinson's short story "A Habit of Waste," the main character has transplanted her personality to a new body and encounters the occupant of her old one: "Here was someone wearing my old cast-off. . . . If she couldn't afford cloning, the doctors would have just downloaded her brain into any donated discard" (para. 4). Cory Doctorow's 2003 *Down and Out in the Magic Kingdom* imagines a high-tech future in which the narrator has "seen the end of death" (8) in the advent of personal memory "backup" systems (15) that let an individual upload his or her subjectivity to a database and download it into a succession of customizable bodies.

Among these examples, Gibson's and Watts's images seem closer to the movement of dubjection tracked here and exemplified by O'Blivion. In Hopkinson's and Doctorow's stories, bodies are interchangeable but still indispensable "storage media" for subjects. Like those of Gibson's "construct" or Watts's "Ascendants," O'Blivion's solution is more drastic for deterritorializing the corporeal body as the privileged seat of subjectivity. The movement of dubjection appears to remix a subject's investments and positions — its psychic interiority and social interactions — moving the preponderance of these from that privileged, traditional site, to remediated sites of remote communication and representation. Such remixing may not necessarily entail physical death, but it problematizes what one considers life. In light of the above, let us consider in more detail some samples of Canadian media culture that flesh out the bare bones of dubjectivity articulated here.

PONTYPOOL'S ABJECT DUBJECTS

In addition to the exemplary O'Blivion, Canadian film has furnished a more recent and very different cinematic story of dubjectivity: Bruce McDonald's *Pontypool,* a film adaptation of Tony Burgess's *Pontypool Changes Everything* (1998). Like *Videodrome,* it is grotesque and satirical, formally and contextually quite removed from Hollywood's more formally formulaic and ideologically conservative representations of the remediated and redistributed self (as in *Strange Days* and *The Matrix*).

Pontypool is a horror film about a small-town Ontario radio station beseiged by zombies. The book on which it is based, Burgess's "autobiographical" novel, *Pontypool Changes Everything,* merits some accompanying discussion, in the context of a theory of the dubject. Both the book and the film narrate approximately the same story of an infectious outbreak turning the populace into zombies. The outbreak starts in rural Ontario, and in the course of the story its cause eventually becomes evident as a virus *communicated by communication* — language use exposes one to infection. Burgess's story is thus a surreal, satirical allegory of the linguistic turn precipitated by structuralist and poststructuralist theories of language and subject formation. The book and film approach this story quite differently, not just in terms of their media but in terms of characterization, plot, and genre. The book shifts among numerous characters' points of view, including major characters who do not appear in the film at all; the film more or less revolves around the perspective of its protagonist Grant Mazzy, a TV personality in the book recharacterized as a radio station morning talk-show host in the film. The book moves the plot from the small town of Pontypool to the megacity Toronto; the film stays located in the Pontypool radio station and keeps most of the large-scale "zombie apocalypse" action entirely offscreen.

In terms of genre, the book assumes and insists on a doubled

formal character as both novel and autobiography. The book's first of two parts is titled "Autobiography" (9); the second, "Novel" (145). But Part One is no first-person memoir of Tony Burgess. It opens with a short, anxious first-person reflection: "I have, to this day, a very persistent certainty that hidden inside me is the revolting knowledge of days when I wasn't myself" (11). Most of Part One is a third-person narrative of one Les Reardon's struggle with and escape from zombies, which abruptly pauses to problematize autobiography: "What is an autobiography? What can fairly be said to lie within its bounds, share in its purpose?" (116). The following chapter, "Autobiography," switches to a second-person account of "your" history of homelessness, drug withdrawal, and suicidal depression. The first part's last chapter, titled "Autopsy," returns to the zombie story. Part Two opens with a chapter called "Biopsy" that explains the zombie-making virus:

> The virus farmed the organisms [which] evolved to the point where they comprehended themselves as copy machines. . . . The virus, fearful of this hostile extension — mechanical reproduction — jumped from the imperilled species to the imperious one. First, it adapted itself to life inside computer memory. (147)

And thence to human hosts. The novel thus becomes the story of a virus's own dubjection, as — borne on vectors of cognition, "paradigms," and language — it shuttles and mutates back and forth between human hosts and their communication media. Burgess's fictional virus replicates in the text and *as* text, through doubling and spacing, repetition and deferral. The above-quoted "Biopsy" offers a brief explanation of this virus's pathology, and names the disease: "The disease is commonly referred to as Acquired Metastructural Pediculosis. Or, AMPS" (149).

Burgess supplements this first overview of AMPS pathology

with a more detailed description during Mazzy's broadcast interview with a doctor, who explains that AMPS "gestates in the deep structures prior to language," as the "primal structure that organizes us as differentiated, discontinuous copies of each other":

> The virus appears in a concept of itself . . . a common effect being the sensation that the present moment is a copy of itself. . . . Other early symptoms occur when the act of selecting a word becomes jammed. . . . As conditions within the personality become ultra-sensitive to their own construction, there is a kind of sped-up production of reality. This is a compensation for, or an escape from, the rending of their once invisible frames. . . . A frightening and painful type of madness ensues. (167)

This "type of madness" turns its victims "into violent zombies. Cannibals" (149). To ward off infection, Dr. Rauf advises Mazzy that "we use as little connotative language as possible." He says that "the mature virus resembles the figure of abjection" and that its self-replicating progeny — "the copy" — manifests in its host only as "a strange, full and undetectable presence" (169). Infected characters announce their affliction by repeating words and their homonyms, as though playing an absurd, grotesque game of broken telephone: "The zombies echo the voice in words they bark at the soldiers: 'Helen!' 'Hello!' 'Help!' They are agitated by the alliteration" (69). This pathologized, abject image of linguistic subject formation gives way to *dubject* formation not only in the virus's remediations but in a farcical, mediatized scene at the TV station where Mazzy works:

> An idea developed by Big Town TV to accommodate its AMPS viewer . . . closed coupling involves a tight repetition, a delay sample that they believe would conform to the rhythm that AMPS consume information. . . . The technology does attract viewers, who are exhilarated by the idea.
>
> A Max Headroom who cannot be cancelled. (152)

The book proliferates dialogic and mediatized images and tropes of self and other as host and invader, individual and double, original and copy, presence and representation, living human and zombie cannibal. Images and tropes converge to parody the poststructuralist theory of the subject's linguistic formation in grotesque figures of the dubject's mimetic deformation.

Like Burgess's book, McDonald's film takes numerous opportunities to represent individuals falling victim to infection as they repeat and stutter the specific words on which they get stuck, like broken records. Burgess wrote the film's screenplay, and makes a cameo appearance. The book's roving, third-person narrator describes numerous large-scale social scenes, events, and violent conflicts featuring large groups, especially masses of zombies (in nauseatingly gruesome yet eerily stylized detail). The film eschews such scenes and literally keeps the zombie hordes outside the doors of the community radio station, which occupies a refurbished church basement. Unlike Hollywood films that take the "zombie apocalypse" premise as an opportunity for spectacular effects and huge crowd scenes, the mass zombie action in *Pontypool* is mostly relayed to the characters via different media, like telephones, broadcasts, computers, and military loudspeakers outside the bunkered station. (These minimalist strategies of cinematic remediation not only "leave more to the imagination" but also indicate the film's modest, typically Canadian budget.) The film *Pontypool* replaces the book's mass spectacle with tragic character drama, in scenes where main characters succumb to the disease in grotesque performances of linguistic dub, like grisly, *noir* Max Headrooms: repeating words to vary, empty, and space out their meanings, leaving the speakers vapid zombies that rage, vomit blood, and expire.

The film changes the story's premise significantly, too. While the book explains AMPS's infectious vectors as "paradigms" and "language," in the film, only speaking aloud in English exposes

one to infection and zombiehood. The main characters resort to writing and passing notes in order to communicate and survive, a remediating tactic that collapses performance and recording. In the denouement, one main character begins to succumb, repeating the word "kill" with rising anxiety and hysteria, but Mazzy helps her stave off infection by what might be called a game of word dissociation, reasoning that if getting stuck on a word is what renders one a zombie, then pre-emptively voiding that word of its meaning through a dramatized "free play of signifiers" acts as a kind of inoculation: "Kill is kiss! Kill is kiss!" (As these scenes might suggest, the film develops a more crowd-pleasing, less nihilistic plot than its print source, which spares neither Mazzy nor most of Ontario's population.)

The changed premise also affords McDonald opportunities for satirical commentary on Canadian culture. Since English transmits the virus, Francophone soldiers are deployed, yet they too remain offscreen. We hear their amplified alerts and commands but never see them; Canada's two solitudes remain divided — by a disease endemic to English speech. The film also remixes and remediates two typically Canadian public institutions — the community radio station that occupies a musty church basement — and turns these conflated public institutions into a private bunker for the embattled morning talk-show team. In addition to its bicultural satire, the film thus satirizes Canadian forms of privatization. Why the church agrees to lease out its basement to the station remains unexplained; that it does so suggests a response to economic pressures and cultural shifts. The film also explains less about the virus's pathology, opening the satirical possibility that it is not English in general but the smug, "straight-talking," and "common sense" neoliberal style of corporate talk radio, aped by this community station and its host, Mazzy, that is turning listeners into raging zombies. Despite its aesthetic and thematic

departures from zombie movie norms, *Pontypool* still visualizes the zombie as an anonymous copy of its horded counterparts, which, taken together (as they usually are), strike a mass pose of abject dubjection. The book, in contrast, individually characterizes many of the zombies encountered even in passing situations: "The AMP who is having this dream now is lying on the floor . . . sail[ing] on for the rest of his natural life striving towards his goals, different now, surely very different" (165). And, also like other horror films, *Pontypool* concentrates its dramatic plot on a gradually dwindling number of more fully realized main characters.

Mazzy is the focalizing protagonist common to both book and film, and, in the latter, his role is different and more prominent than in the former; however, in both texts he is characterized predominantly as a media personality, an identification that interpellates him as an exemplary dubject. Towards the film's conclusion, he affirms, in a hard-boiled, triumphant tone, "I'm still here" — significantly broadcasting these words via the station booth mic and thus mediatizing and dispersing his insistence on cognitive integrity and corporeal survival.

This preliminary theorizing of dubjection has focused so far on fictional cases from cultural productions across media, but chiefly from cinema. However, we see evidence of dubjection not only among cultural productions but also among *cultural producers*. On this note, let us turn, in closing, to just a few examples of dubjectivity as a transnational remediation of the Canadian cultural producer's own, historical self. For if the characterizations of dubjects in *Videodrome* and *Pontypool* suggest some of the distinctly Canadian parameters for a theory of dubjectivity, these parameters also spotlight some paragons of dubjection among Canada's cultural producers and luminaries.

THE INVISIBLE AND VISIBLE HAND OF ATWOOD

In her more recent science fiction novels, Margaret Atwood has shown an uncanny, unnerving sense of timing. *Oryx and Crake,* Atwood's dystopian novel of humankind's extermination via a viral pandemic plotted by a rogue geneticist, made its debut simultaneously with that of SARS. Its sequel, *The Year of the Flood,* in which the flood refers to the aforementioned disease, was released in the year of the latest influenza pandemic. Atwood toured widely to promote *Oryx and Crake* yet tellingly cancelled an appearance during the peak of the outbreak in Toronto, the North American city hit hardest by SARS. During this 2003 tour, Atwood "came up with the idea for the LongPen," a "remote autograph technology" that could provide "a less taxing way to promote her books and connect with fans" (Wolframe 13).

Atwood went on to invent and incorporate a company for the LongPen, a machine that remotely replicates someone's handwritten signature. The device literally stands in for the author at a book reading and signing event, paired with an interactive webcam or teleconferencing interface that allows the author and fan to see and talk to each other. Atwood invented the LongPen to reduce the carbon footprint, as well as the personal stress, of book tours, although it has other legal and business applications. And as researchers like Julie Rak and Phebe Wolframe have shown, the LongPen also has cultural functions and implications that make it legible here as a form of dubjection. Wolframe argues that Atwood uses the LongPen "to negotiate with the deathly specters of both celebrity and authorship" (14) and that it is, in a word, *spooky:*

> The LongPen is a way to project a sort of technologically advanced version of an astral body. . . . [It] is spooky precisely because it forces the reader to question the realness of their author encounter; fans meet the author through a screen,

> and their book is signed by a seemingly autonomous robot arm (24, 27).

Atwood has written and spoken about authorial celebrity as "a living death which splits the writer into public (spectral) and private (living) versions of themselves" (Rak 7). Wolframe recounts a telling anecdote in which Atwood, unable to attend a fundraising function in 1982, "created a life size 'Peggy doll' who attended the event in her stead. The doll had a tape recorder in its purse, which played a recording of Atwood voicing plausibly evasive statements such as 'Oh, I wouldn't really have time to do that'" (25). The year before Atwood invented the LongPen, she published *Negotiating with the Dead,* reflections on writing that include suggestive pretexts for the thinking that developed the device. One chapter, on the writer's public and private roles, is titled "Duplicity: The Jekyll Hand, the Hyde Hand, and the Slippery Double" (qtd. in Wolframe 18). Atwood also advises the reader to "pay no attention to the facsimiles of the writer that appear on talk shows" (qtd. in Wolframe 25). Subsequently reflecting on public reactions to the LongPen, Atwood wryly notes the Gothic and grotesque associations attached to its "threat of the Monster Body Part" (qtd. in Wolframe 18). And yet to promote and legitimize the LongPen, Atwood describes it (in McLuhanesque terms) as "an extension of the Self, just as . . . the pen [is] of the hand" (qtd. in Wolframe 16). Her own writing on the technology evinces a tension between apprehending its uncanny effects and appreciating its instrumental affordances. Wolframe foregrounds the LongPen's problematization of the self, of the literary work, and of their occasional conflation: "The LongPen, like many of Atwood's other works, has a place in a historical lineage, in the world of technology, in the realm of the spooky and the speculative, and in discourses of the self" (26). Hence the LongPen's compelling place in a theory of dubjectivity.

"A TOTAL RETHINKING OF THE NATURE OF INDIVIDUALITY"

As the primal scene of the LongPen's invention, the production of *Oryx and Crake* provides an intertextual bridge to our last case study in dubjection: Toronto's virtuoso pianist, Glenn Gould. As the novel's narrator, Jimmy, remembers of first meeting Crake: "Crake wasn't Crake yet, at that time: his name was Glenn. Why did it have two n's instead of the usual spelling? 'My dad liked music,' was Crake's explanation . . . 'he named me after a dead pianist'" (84). Atwood claims that the "dreaded author tour" prompted her to conceive of the LongPen; Gould also tired quickly of touring performances and the concert-hall economy that demanded them. He was alienated by the scene: "As I look back on all those years it seems as though some other person did all that" ("Ecstasy" 331). Gould's profession had ensconced concerts as the test and affirmation of authentic virtuosity, but Gould himself began to attack them, with reasoned and combative critique, as the antithesis of artistic achievement in an age of mechanical reproduction. Like Atwood, Gould developed an eminently dubjective solution to the problem of a demanding and exhausting live performance schedule — but a more radical solution. Whereas Atwood has introduced a supplementary, dubjective proxy for authorial performance, Gould just dropped performance altogether and retired to the recording studio and the broadcast booth:

> Working to the microphone . . . is a very easy thing for me, a very natural thing. Any other kind of projection now seems very strange to me. The difference between my first *Goldberg* recording [1955] and this one [1981] shows up in such things as Variation Fifteen. . . . I can no longer recognize the person who did that. ("Ecstasy" 332)

In the mid-1960s, Gould caused a sensation when it became apparent that he was quietly abandoning live concert performances and tours, as well as speaking engagements, to focus strictly on studio production and radio broadcasting. Gould, in effect, *dubjected* his public persona, abdicating the expectations of music performance and the apparatuses of cultural and commercial capital that had installed live performance as the standard for taking a musician's measure. Opposing these apparatuses as obsolete and irrelevant to art, Gould articulated a critical position on the affordances and refinements of recording, in opposition to the aura and technical deficiencies of concerts.

His major statement of this case is the 1965 CBC radio documentary he produced, "Dialogue on the Prospects of Recording": "In the electronic age the art of music will become much more viably a part of our lives. . . . The audience would be the artist and their life would be art" ("Prospects" 353). Gould's argument about mechanical reproduction is to music what Walter Benjamin's is to the visual arts (although Gould was likely unaware of Benjamin; his argument derived more explicitly from McLuhan's media theory). In the documentary, Gould argues that new electronic media represent a more private, individualized, and aesthetically satisfying future of music in contrast to the outmoded public "museums" of live performance that, for him, no longer lay claim to the optimal appreciation of music. Gould echoes Benjamin on the arbitrariness and hegemony of aura (he cites a wartime forger of Vermeer paintings, Hans van Meegeren, as a "private hero" [341]); he echoes Barthes's "death of the author" in positing the declining relevance of authorial biography — tied to concert tradition — in appreciating music; and he anticipates both scholars like Jacques Attali and DIY music practices like rap on the rise of the home listener as, increasingly, a participant

and even composer (what we now call a *prosumer*) in his or her own right. As a result, he concludes, "this whole question of individuality in the creative process . . . will be subjected to a radical reconsideration" (352), with implications for society and culture more generally: "I believe that the ultimate gift of electronic culture to art will be a total rethinking of the nature of individuality" ("Forgery" 231).

Gould's vision of art, its purpose, and the artist's role are inextricably mixed with his views on recording, all of which identify him as an exemplary dubject. Almost as famous for his personal eccentricities as for his musical talent, Gould frequently represented himself in such self-alienating terms and radically dubjected his personality and persona in his piano playing, in his recording and broadcasting, and in interviews. Reflecting on his "secret in playing the piano," Gould said "I need to feel that these are really not my fingers . . . I have to find a way of standing outside of myself while at the same time being totally committed to what I'm doing" ("Ecstasy" 333). Gould freely admitted a *categorical* preference for mediation over presence: "I much prefer to have a conversation like this one on the telephone rather than in person. For me the presence of people is a distraction" (333). Gould also often scripted and published interviews with himself, as in the mise-en-abysmal "Glenn Gould Interviews Glenn Gould About Glenn Gould," with its feedback loop of ironic reflections on Gould's "radical career departure" into "a total immersion in media" (317). It is arguable, too, that Gould's claims for the *"pluralistic* values which electronic forms assert" ("Prospects" 341; emphasis added) open his remediated doubling and spacing of his own several selves to postcolonial interpretation as an articulation of Canadian media culture and Canadian multiculture.

The apotheosis of Gould's dubjectivity is the Voyager 2 space probe, which carries his recording of a selection from Bach's

Well-Tempered Clavier with other "music from Earth" on the ambassadorial phonograph sent with the probe (see "Music"). Like Atwood's LongPen, Gould's representative and replayable presence aboard Voyager 2 provides a striking historical rather than fictional example of the technological-transnationalist dubject of the postmodern mediascape. The satellite preserves Gould's performance for an unimaginable posterity: an audible etching of European baroque music on a gold-plated but outdated storage device, which may not ever be played, recruited for a space mission launched by the most symbolically imperialist and "SF-capitalized" (see Fisher) institution in the USA — an interstellar mission that exited the solar system in 1989, will terminate its telemetric transmissions in 2025, and yet may one day remain the sole surviving artefact of modern human civilization.

Spinning into the farthest space yet reached by any human project, sounding the limits of representation, Gould's historical case rivals O'Blivion's fictional one as an exemplar of dubjectivity, this remediated remixing of subjectivity that continues to reverberate through Canadian culture. The figure of the dubject and the movement of dubjection suggest a heuristic device for interpreting cultural images of self and other in the hypermediated, overdeveloped world; however, the fact that the fictional dubjectivities of *Videodrome* and *Pontypool* find historical counterparts like Atwood and Gould broach the theory's broader social applications. Articulating Canada's political economy of compromised sovereignty and its history of colonization by various cultural and media empires, the incarnations and iterations of dubjection position the individual citizen as a commodity produced by competing intellectual property claims, the consumer of media as what media themselves consume, the organic self reorganized and reproduced by its technological others.

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